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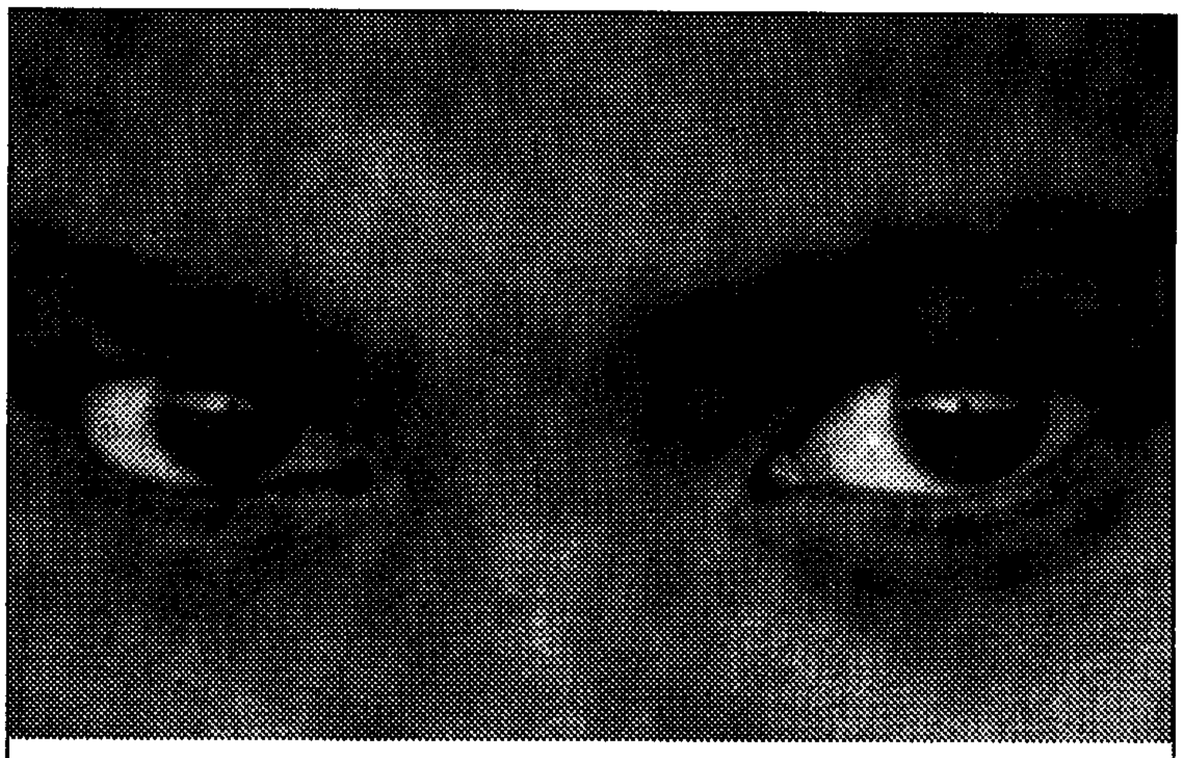

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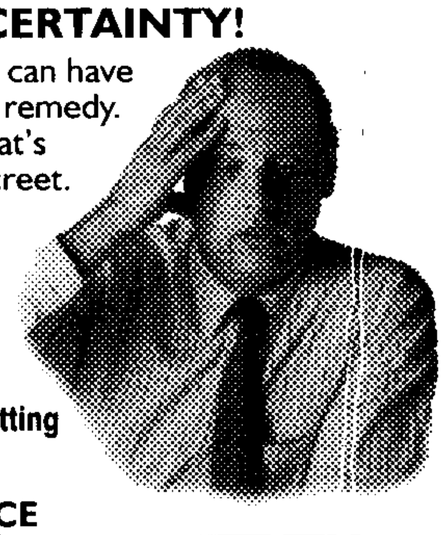

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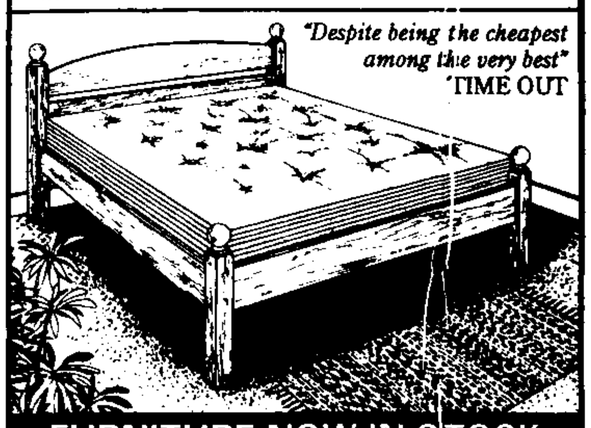

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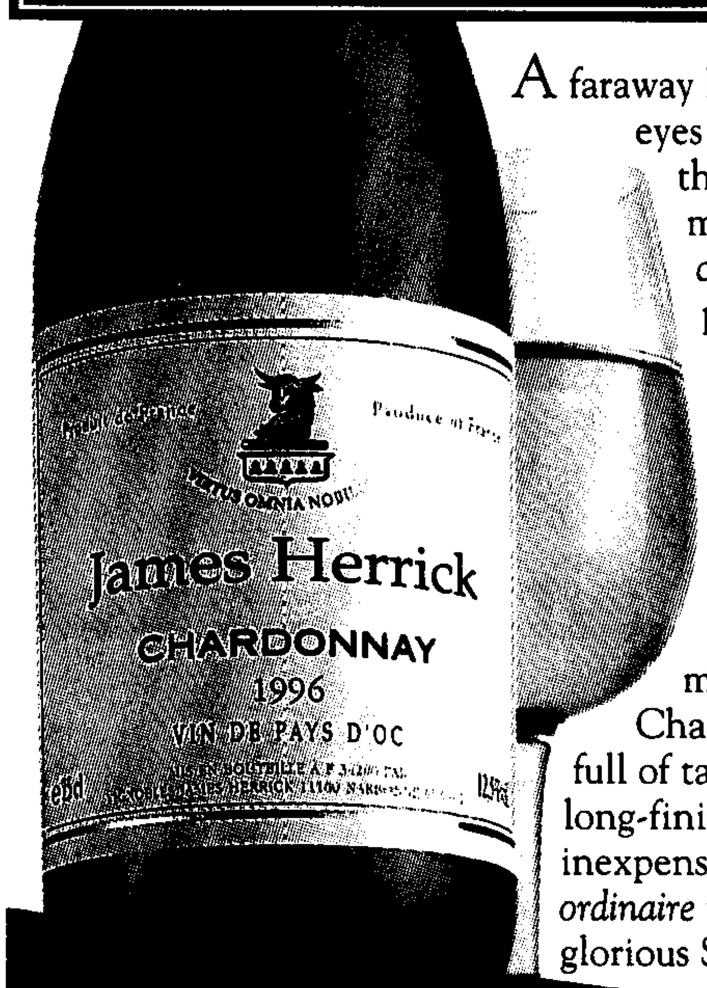

A faraway look comes into people's eyes when mention is made of the South of France. For most, it is the capital of *chic*: a sun-kissed playground of exotic resorts and spectacular scenery studded with ancient vineyards - among them, *La Motta*, *La Boulandiere* and *Les Garrigues de Truilhas*, where James Herrick makes the definitive *Midi* Chardonnay. Rich, stylish and full of taste; fresh, yet fruity and long-finishing. And amazingly inexpensive. Why settle for *vin ordinaire* when you can afford the glorious South?

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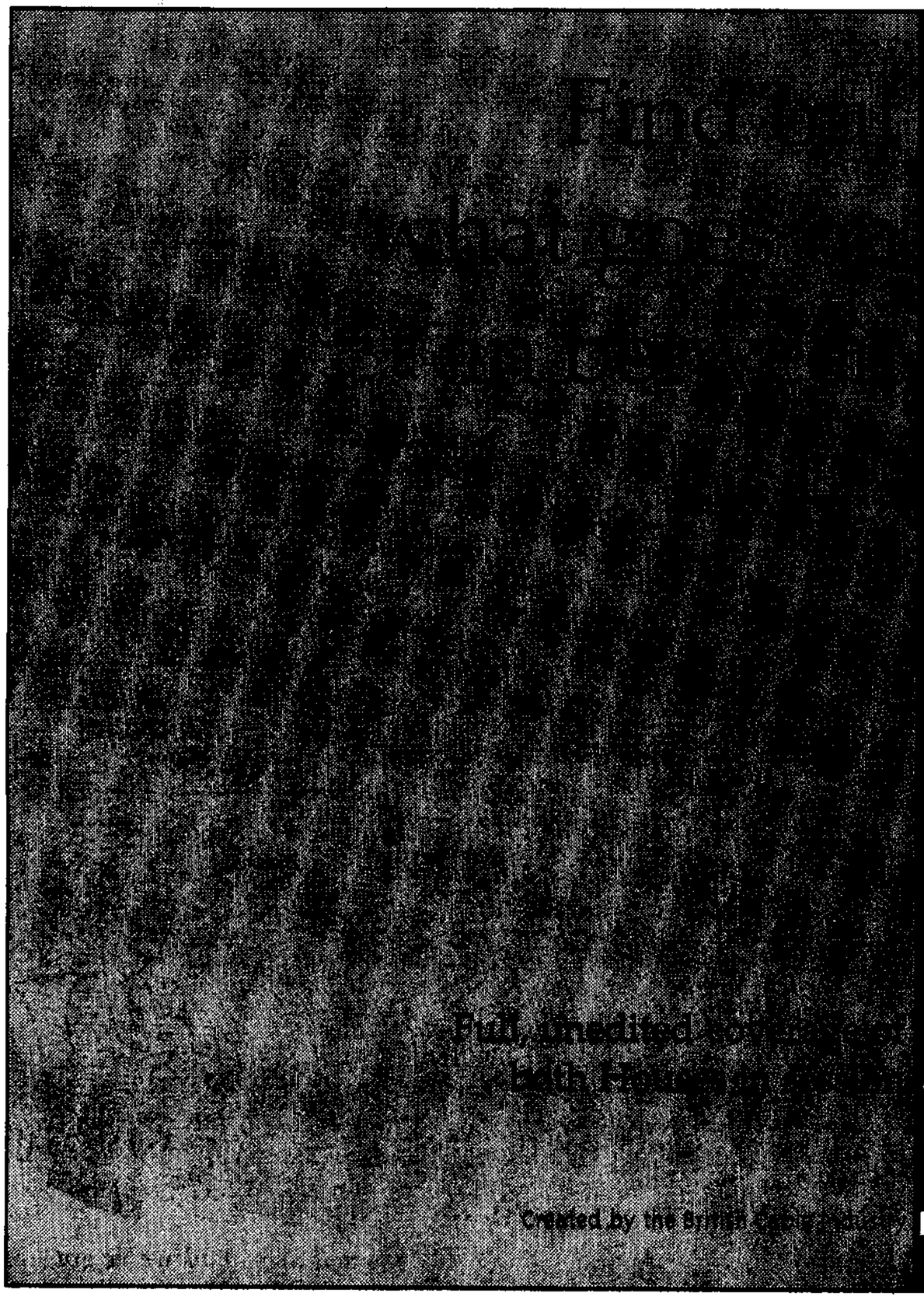

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Gnome

THE decision of the High Court to award my seventh wife, Lady Scandia Gnome, the disgraceful sum of £1.50 by way of a divorce settlement represents as foul an injustice as is possible to imagine.

Lady Scandia's claim that she thought up the name "Gnomitat" and designed all the revolutionary furniture including the two-legged chair, the strip-pine kettle and the stainless steel futon is as ludicrous as it is true *(surely 'offensive'? E.S.).*

Nor is it the case that Lady Scandia designed the seating plan for London's first 50,000-seat stadium restaurant "Quaglignomes" and devised the internationally acclaimed one-course menu — A bed of a lettuce on a plate £28.99.

On the contrary, Lady Scandia was a marginal figure in my life and as far as I know I have never met her.

The idea that she was my wife as claimed by the courts is a Scandia Magnatum *(surely 'Scandalum Magnatum' E.S.)* of the very highest order.

My demand is that this monstrous judgement be overturned at once and Lady Gnome be forced to accept the very reasonable offer I first made to her of a 25p voucher redeemable in the lightbulb department of any Gnomitat store until the end of June. (Not Brent Cross.)

E. Strobes
Lord Gnome
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—Text of speech by president of the National Association of Headteachers, Scarborough, May 97.

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COLOUR SECTION

THE privatised utilities are preparing to produce £8.5bn to meet their windfall tax demands and their regulators are all saying it can be done without the need to increase prices.

What the regulators now need to explain is why their supervision of their charges was so shoddy they did not notice that these vast surplus profits were being squirrelled away.

HACKS in the BBC Radio newsroom were surprised to find a "senior Labour source" denying to the Press Association that someone had leaked budget information to the media.

"Everyone has known about our plans to abolish tax relief on private medical care for pensioners for many months, this really is a lot of hot air," the source explained.

How odd, then, that throughout the previous evening BBC hacks had to endure a blizzard of angry phone calls from Gordon Brown's sidekick, Charlie "Whippersnapper" Whelan, warning them that they'd be "out of a job within 24 hours" if the story wasn't pulled.

ANOTHER mighty blow against the freedom of the press has been delivered by Mr Justice Maurice Kay in the case of Camelot plc v Centaur Communications.

Centaur owns *Marketing Week* which, as the *Eye* disclosed two issues ago, first broke the story of the bonuses Camelot directors were paying themselves.

On 28 May *Marketing Week* published the leaked Camelot accounts (which were to be published anyway on 3 June), and Camelot applied for a court order obliging *Marketing Week* to hand over the leaked documents. There was only one reason: to identify the leaker.

Peter Murphy, financial director of the Fat Cats Creamery (Camelot), made a statement. "The unidentified source," he said, "must be operating at a high level within the organisation or has access to those who are working at a high level." *Marketing Week* refused to hand over the accounts, pleading section 10 of the contempt of court act 1981, which allows journalists not to disclose sources. One exception is if "disclosure is necessary in the interests of justice".

This same argument occupied lawyers in the Goodwin case in 1991, when a young journalist on an engineering paper was convicted of contempt of court for not disclosing a source. Lord Bridge (the man who first convicted the Birmingham Six) stated that it was "in the interests of justice" that an employer should be able "to identify a disloyal servant" and sack him. This bizarre view was, much later, contemptuously chucked out by the European court of human rights in 1996. The journalist was entirely cleared.

However, Mr Justice Maurice Kay noted with relief that the European convention on human rights "does not presently form part of English law", and blithely ignored the European precedent. After a tortuous judgment he found for Camelot.

Marketing Week is appealing. If it loses the appeal it will be in contempt of court if it does not disclose its source. If the source is rooted out and sacked, another great battle will have been won for Camelot and the secrecy and greed which are its hallmarks.

A SNIVELLING letter to the *Guardian* from Labour backbenchers Michael Clapham and Ken Purchase refers to their membership of the trade and industry select committee which unanimously cleared Jonathan Aitken of any wrongdoing in the BMARC/arms to Iran affair.

The MPs whimper that "access to relevant material could have been improved" and ask: "Who can now say that Aitken was a more reliable witness than Gerald James"?

The answer (as provided by the Eye at the time: 902) was that any reasonable MP confronted with the evidence in front of the select committee would have concluded that Aitken was lying and James was telling the truth. The committee's unanimous conclusion to the contrary proved only that the MPs who were worried about the evidence but voted anyway with the Tory majority were sadly lacking in the spine department.

A POLICE Complaints Authority (PCA) press statement on 4 July, almost completely ignored by the media, disclosed that two Metropolitan police officers are to be charged with disciplinary offences after a complaint by John Gorman (*Eyes passim*).

The background to Gorman's complaint was set out at length in Eye 903 almost exactly a year ago. On 14 May 1993, the Enfield flat of John Gorman, who had twice complained about British Airways, was raided by seven police officers accompanied by a senior officer of British Airways security. Gorman was taken to Heathrow police station (where all costs, salaries, etc, are paid by the British Airports Authority: chief customer, British Airways), held for 10 hours, released on police bail and told to report twice a month, which he did for six months until the police finally agreed there was no evidence against him.

Gorman has always insisted that privileged correspondence between him and his solicitor about his complaint against BA were seized by police that day. The police angrily denied it. Whoops! In 1996, purely by accident, a box of documents, including the very letters Gorman said had been seized, was discovered at the office of the Metropolitan police solicitor's office. Riled, the PCA set up an inquiry under DS Fred Ashmore, of Thames Valley police. Ashmore's report was finished in March, and this month's press release is the result. One officer is to be charged with breaching rules relating to seizure of documents, the other with neglect of duty. Watch this space.

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"What chance do you think we've got of taking off?

Street of Shame

JUST FANCY THAT!

"At first, he seems too good to be true. Jonathan Aitken is tall, handsome, rich, clever, successful, popular and — as far as it is possible to tell — happy. At 52, he is not so much gilded as pure gold. But, from time to time, the lustre is briefly tarnished by a hint of scandal, allegation of corruption or suggestion of impropriety. It is the upshot of these sudden setbacks that ordinary mortals find most irritating. They never provide any opportunity to sympathise or gloat — for Jonathan Aitken makes a triumph out of every adversity.

"Three months ago, he was a political late developer who had awkward questions to answer about who paid his hotel bill when he stayed at Mohamed Al-Fayed's Paris Ritz Hotel. Today he is the Cabinet Minister whom shrewder Tories back to succeed John Major."

— Roy "Shrewd" Hattersley, *Mail on Sunday*, 29 January 1995.

IN New York, at the auction of Diana's frocks, our American cousins fail to treat matinee idol of the British royal press corps, Richard Kay, with the deference of our own Princess of Wales (see *Eyes* past).

"You remind me of someone," remarks an auction house gel. The *Mail* hack beamed. "Richard Gere?" No, one of the Stones. Jagger? No, she replied, Charlie Watts!

Returning to Blighty, that doyen of royal hacks, the *Mirror*'s majestic James Whitaker, instead of being greeted like a hero, was treated like a common criminal by Customs. Having sped back by Concorde, after buying a pink and fuchsia Diana ballgown for his socialist rag (a mere £29,053), Whitaker was informed he'd have to pay £5,000 duty, plus VAT. The hack was finally allowed to remove his merchandise (for an urgent photoshoot with an Eastender star) on condition the bill would be settled pronto.

24 hours later, *Mirror* lawyers came up with a let-out clause that items of historical interest were except from duty — and what, indeed, could be more historical than Diana's fuchsia frock?

IN A speech two weeks ago, Mirror Group boss David "Rommel" Montgomery attacked his fellow press barons for "bickering" and "disunity".

He may soon become a victim of this lack of tycoon solidarity himself. For it seems that "socialist peer" Lord Hollick — a man even more puritanical and single-minded than Rommel — now has his eye on the Mirror Group and is hoping that the banks who own most of the shares will desert Montgomery and come over to his side.

The challenge could hardly have come at a worse time, since Monty is rather busy at the moment arranging a divorce settlement from his last wife, gorgeous pouting Heidi Kingstone. In the course of negotiations, he was obliged to give a full account of his assets — including a house which he owns in Umbria.

This came as something of a surprise to Kingstone, according to her friends. For it transpired that he had bought the Italian villa while he was still living with her — without ever mentioning it.

Whether he will be able to hang on to his secret lovenest — or his newspaper group, for that matter — remains to be seen.

PROPERTY prices in Islington have gone haywire since Tony Blair moved out — and Fleet Street can't keep up.

Recently the London *Evening Standard* named its Buy of the Week as a modern flat in the borough boasting a "pink marble front" and "light contemporary feel". The puff priced the flat at "about £350,000 through Hugh Grover Associates".

Oddly, a property article in the same day's *Times* also described "a distinctive modern home" for sale in Islington, adding modestly that the flat belonged to "the editor of the *News of the World* (published by News International, owner of *The Times*)".

There was lots of guff about it being an "inner-city haven in pink marble", which no doubt delighted Phil Hall, the editor of the *Screws*. But where the News Corp paper did its staff man proud was on price. Suddenly Hall's flat had put on 75 grand and was being sold "for offers of around £425,000".

LADIES' DOUBLES

Yet Monica Seles is having her body examined as though she was on an operating table, and references to top players like Martina Hingis and Anna Kournikova are as much about their looks as their tennis... This sort of reporting is sexist and insulting to women. Little wonder so many are put off sport.

— Page 3, *Daily Mail*, 30 June

It needed something special to bring them down from the rafters of Centre Court at the end of Tim's Day, but Anna Kournikova has the talent and the looks to bring any audience back to its senses. Little Miss Glasnost...

— Page 65, *Daily Mail*, 30 June

THE *Daily Telegraph*'s reputation as a wholesome family newspaper has taken a battering thanks to the outrageous antics of Henry Giles, a young hack from the *Torygraph* magazine.

Arriving for a country-house weekend in Norfolk last Saturday, Giles startled his hosts by downing a pint-glass of vodka in one gulp. Thus fortified, he lurched into the garden and asked a posse of small girls — aged between 10 and 12 — if they would like to inspect his private parts. There were no takers. Undaunted, Giles lunged at one of the 12-year-olds, forcing his hand up her skirt. When an irate mother accosted him, he grabbed her between the legs as well.

Another guest, Tom Bantock, then picked up a garden spade and tried to decapitate the maniac. Though no stranger to rough stuff — he is currently writing a racy autobiography about his years as a Norfolk poacher and Soho club-owner — Bantock was swiftly disarmed by the demented Giles, who proceeded to break Bantock's thumb and gouge large chunks of flesh out of his arm.

When Giles was at last evicted — after demolishing another bottle of vodka, and indeed demolishing several flower-beds with his energetic spadework — he set off for the local station, Downham Market, to catch the next train to London. "It was like *The Shining*," one witness said. "There were children screaming, and we had to barricade the house and garden in case he came back."

By midnight, several hours later, all was calm. The children, who were camping in the garden, slept peacefully in their tents — when a wild-eyed figure once more hove into view: "We had to wake the children up by torchlight and carry them inside, in case he climbed over the fence. Then we locked and bolted all the doors." Unable to find any more victims, the man from the *Telegraph* wandered off. He was last seen snoozing fitfully on a platform at Downham Market station — with his flies still undone.

CHARLES WEDDING SHOCK

WHILE lecturing Jonathan Aitken about "the importance of being honest", the *Observer* recently published a tissue of, er, inaccuracies on its front page, not all of which it has been willing to correct.

The *Absurder*'s hapless "media editor" Richard Brooks revealed that Joan Hardwick, the new biographer of Clementine Churchill, had been denied access to the lottery-funded Churchill archive by Clemmie's daughter, Lady Soames, who had herself removed vital documents from it. Wrong on all counts: and so, when cornered by Messrs Sue Grabbit and Runne, the *Obs* had to apologise and fork out £10,000 to a charity of Lady Soames's choice.

Accompanying the story, however, was a shaming pictorial cock-up. To illustrate Hardwick's case that Winston and Clementine were at odds, the paper published a photo of them "keeping their distance" on Budget Day, 1927. Alas! The woman walking beside Churchill was not his wife but his daughter Diana.

There are Budget Day pictures galore of Winnie and Clemmie with arms entwined. But the *Obs* seems curiously reluctant to set the record straight by printing one.

MEANWHILE, Richard Brooks has been involved in yet another *Observer* fiasco.

Since he regards all cultural stories as his sole prerogative, he was most indignant to discover recently that the paper's investigative team had come up with an exclusive about the Royal Opera House using lottery money to finance redundancies. "Oh, that's all old hat," he assured deputy editor Paul Webster, who was running the paper in the absence of Will Hutton.

It was nothing of the kind, but Webster meekly pulled the story — only to see it splashed all over other newspapers two days later. Webster's reluctance to run the scoop is, of course, quite unrelated to the fact that — as Brooks gleefully warned him — the new chairman of the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, Bob Gavron, is also a director of the Royal Opera.

ONE SAD outcome of the Aitken libel case was that former prostitute and sado-masochism expert Paula Strudwick did not give evidence.

She was prepared to do so and had given a statement to the defence lawyers, which contained the following remarkable passage.

"In the summer of 1981 or 1982, I visited Inglewood Health Hydro. Jonathan Aitken was meant to join me at Inglewood but was unable to do so due to his business commitments. He did, however, telephone me and gave me instructions of a place near the Hydro where I would find birch twigs. He wanted me to stop to collect the twigs so that I could beat him with them upon my return to London. A friend of mine picked me up from Inglewood to drive me back from London. We followed Jonathan's instructions and I was able to collect a number of birch twigs which I put in the boot of the car and drove home with. Jonathan had instructed me to soak the birch twigs in the bath for a set amount of time so that I could beat him with them and was extremely excited at the prospect of this."

LEISURE TIME

MICHAEL GRADE, new chief executive of First Leisure, has expressed his desire to get "people out of the home" and involved in leisure activities. Perhaps he should get out of the office and visit Blackpool's South pier instead, and experience the fiasco of First Leisure's complex there.

Parents visiting the pier had put their eight-year-old daughter and her 10-year-old friend on a dodgem ride. Once the ride started, flames had risen from the pedal area of the car and the two girls were forced to leap to safety.

The ride operator simply threw a bucket of water over the flaming electric car — and then allowed the children straight back on to the soaking track, offered them another ride for free.

The following day a journalist phoned First Leisure's press office to ask for its reaction to these lax safety procedures. He was told: "No such incident ever took place. I think the family are having you on."

Unfortunately for the insistent press officer, the journalist was also the father of the eight-year-old in question. Eventually the press officer admitted that there had been some smoke but definitely no flames. He also said that the fire brigade had been alerted. When the journalist approached the local fire service it said it knew nothing about the incident.

With the peak holiday season approaching, the family is demanding that safety procedures are reviewed. But with the announcement that First Leisure's profits have just fallen by 5 percent, perhaps the company has other things on its mind.

ART NEWS

AN ADVERT for the National Gallery's new show "Seurat and The Bathers", which opened last week, rather coyly mentions that there is an "admission charge" without saying what it is. In fact, punters will have to pay £6. It adds that advance bookings can be made through the First Call agency — without saying these will cost £7.60.

The bashfulness is understandable. When the National Gallery puts on sponsored exhibitions, admission is usually free; but although the Seurat exhibition has been lavishly sponsored by the Pearson Group, visitors are expected to stump up nevertheless. What the advert also forgets to say is that the painting at the centre of the show — Seurat's "The Bathers", naturally enough — belongs to the National Gallery anyway and is part of the permanent collection.

In other words, members of the public — and Pearson — are being asked to shell out for the privilege of seeing a picture which can normally be viewed in the selfsame gallery entirely free of charge. Perhaps National Heritage secretary Chris Smith, who has come out firmly against admission fees for national museums and galleries, might care to investigate this daylight robbery.

O·B·N

This week, the former Marie-Christine von Reibnitz and Prince Michael, 52, were still in celebratory mood, dining at Harry's Bar, the exclusive Mayfair club-restaurant with a group of friends, and other patrons remarked on how youthful the Princess is looking these days: not a wrinkle, not a crow's foot.

No wonder: it was just a blink away that Princess Michael was portrayed as the wild woman of the Royal Family, while sweetness and light greeted anything the Princess of Wales and the Duchess of York did. All has now changed with the Kents leading an exemplary life. Prince Michael for King, I say.

NIGEL DEMPSTER
Daily Mail

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

New Labour Terminology

Roger *(verb)*, usually used in the passive voice. *Meaning:* To be lobbied so powerfully by a New Labour Peer that there is no option but to cave in.

Examples

Q: Why did the Millennium Dome go ahead?
A: Mandelson was Rogered.

Q: Why did Mark Fisher get a job at Heritage after being left off the original list?
A: Blair was Rogered.

Q: When *did* Lord Rogers actually join the Labour Party?
A: I can't answer that. I've been Rogered.

HALLO! *TO the "re-launch" of Christopher's, trendy Covent Garden cafe, where OAP Sir Robin Day is on splendidly frisky form. Meeting lovely Jessica Callan, a young Telegraph reporter who had displayed her "belly-button ring" on a previous meeting, the great inquisitor came straight to the point: "Did you leave school with your virginity intact?"*

The young hackette fled, only be cornered shortly afterwards by the beady-eyed Sir Robin, who announced grandly: "Now I'll have another look at that belly-button."

HALLO! A VISIT by the Marquesa to the London restaurant run by feisty TV chef Nancy Lam is much enhanced by the arrival of a glamorous quartet at the next table — restaurant critic A.A. Gill, ex-weathergirl Nicola Formby, ex-celebrity Andrew Neill and an unidentified "babe" who is apparently his companion for the evening.

Nancy, however, seems less impressed. Staring suspiciously at Neill's gorgeous escort, she demands: "Are you paid for?"

She is, I feel sure, merely inquiring about the arrangements for splitting the restaurant bill!

HALLO! TO Henley. The regatta is ruined, however, by a chorus of complaints about lovable Gerald Ratner, of crap jewellery fame.

Gerald is opening a health club, The Workshop, in Henley-on-Thames — a snip at £600-a-year membership, plus £120 joining fee.

But ungrateful locals snivel because some paid a reduced premium by coughing up at the beginning of the year — and the club still hasn't opened. Another minor snag is that Gerald's new premises were inadvertently advertised on the understanding there would also be a luxury swimming pool.

The Workshop, who say they now plan to open on the 28th of July, informed the Marquesa that the club had a twenty-metre swimming pool. But the South Oxfordshire District Council, inexplicably, tell me no planning permission has yet been granted for a pool.

No wonder locals have already christened it The Crapshop.

HALLO! *THE Marquesa was delighted that her old chum Sir Edward Heath, despite greatly advanced years, is still eating properly.*

The chief cheerleader of China hands in the Commons has been on several freebies recently to see his chums in Beijing. Asked after one junket how he had been treated, he replied: "Very well. I was guest of honour at 14 banquets in three days."

HALLO! JONATHAN Aitken's shining probity was, naturally, evident at a tender age. At university, he founded a mag called the *Oxford Tory*, which lasted precisely one issue.

Bravely, it carried an expose of the city's leading citizen, the late Robert Maxwell, who immediately summoned the young editor to his Oxford mansion. Pulp the lot, demanded Cap'n Bob. Aitken, showing the financial flair later to make him famous, offered to sell the entire print run (sixteen copies) to the old crook for £1,000. "£550 in cash," counter-offered Maxwell.

Here that trusty sword of truth made its first appearance.

The price was right!

HALLO! WILLIAM Hague was not half as boring when he was at Oxford either. To set the record straight I hereby reprint the charismatic new Tory leader's very first appearance in a gossip column!

When Mr Vague was President of the Oxford Union, in 1981, the university newspaper *Cherwell* penned this charming item in its John Evelyn diary: "Was puffing Willie Hague really giving *speaking* lessons to Mr Littlejohn in the back of his mini? Has the episode any connection with the fact that a wild-eyed Damian Thompson attacked Hague's door, wielding an axe?"

A little research with Oxford contemporaries disappoints the obvious interpretation of *Cherwell*'s smear since the object of all this passion was the bubbly Ms Sally Littlejohn, later President of the Oxford University Conservative Association.

Nevertheless, Damian 'Wild Eyed' Thompson (subsequently religious affairs correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* and now literary editor of the *Catholic Herald*) is baffled. "I did drink rather a lot in those days and I think Hague rather disapproved," he confesses to the Marquesa. "But I'm sure I'd remember if I'd taken an axe to anyone's door."

"We think the butler did it, Sarge"

HALLO! THE Marquesa was delighted to receive her invitation to the wedding of the year — that of the *Daily Telegraph*'s Victoria Coombe, official minder to the paper's ancient monument, Bill Deedes.

Deedes's dotage on the *Hellograph* has been made much more bearable by the presence of blonde Coombe. The church correspondent is sent out with the veteran peer on stories to keep him amused and to give the desperate-to-be-young *Torygraph* plenty of youth-over-experience type angles.

The executives' gratitude evidently knows no bounds, for when they learnt that Coombe was getting married (to a decent army officer, natch) at St Bride's, Fleet Street, the hacks' church, they immediately stumped up for a choir — £800, no less.

Sensibly Victoria is ignoring the rumblings of discontent from jealous colleagues in the newsroom.

'The Marquesa'

IN THE TEAROOM

ISLINGTON is an unlikely hotbed of ferment against the excesses of "new" Labour. But the borough that gave us the Granita summit, the house-price recovery and that prototypical adherent of the vague but warm-worded ethical doctrine Blairites like to call "social-*ism*" — Margaret Hodge — is now nurturing a mischievous resistance to the government's manic benefits slashers.

Islington North MP Jeremy Corbyn has emerged as the organiser of a group of left-leaning backbenchers determined to soften Harriet Harman's planned welfare revolution.

Just as the Child Support Agency found it a lot easier to achieve its "performance indicators" by screwing more dosh out of model divorcés who'd already made generous settlements than by tracking down irresponsible pay-nothing bolters, so Harriet has discovered that the halt and the lame are a far softer touch than intransigently idle dole scammers. Under her plans, Jack the Lad will continue to lounge through the long summer afternoons watching daytime TV in his grace-and-favour council flat while recipients of long-term sickness and invalidity benefit are hauled in for a good kicking by the commissars of the welfare-to-work programme.

But while the bearded radical Corbyn agitates away on the backbenches, who will play the Trojan Horse in cabinet? Step forward trendy N1's Chris Smith. The member for Islington South certainly knows the detail: before being reshuffled into the discard pile at heritage, he used to be the party's social security ace. He's also sore at being trumped by Peter Mandelson over the Millennium Dome.

'Urquhart'

BOB "time-to-get-tough" Ayling, the chairman of British Airways, is a close pal of Tony Blair and enforcement minister Peter Mandelson, and just the sort of businessman Blair admires: successful, good at soundbites and with a hatred of trade unions.

Indeed, he sounds the perfect candidate to be a government adviser — which is what Blair tried unsuccessfully to make him.

However, as the brothers gathered for the annual T&G knees-up in Brighton, the question on most delegates' lips was: "Who will the leader support?" in the union's dispute with British Airways.

The answer is glaringly obvious; but how can a T&G-sponsored prime minister break it to the union which gives his party shedloads of money that the marriage is over?

"Only nine months and he's already marching!"

WHEN a BBC radio station phoned Andrew Smith, the "new" minister for employment and disability rights, with a simple request — would he go on air after the budget to discuss its implications? — the MP for Oxford West's office at the department for education and employment was flummoxed.

"What budget?" came the response.

The BBC explained that it was Gordon Brown's first budget — something of a momentous event in recent Labour party history. "Er, when is it... at what time?"

Once Smith's office had woken up and realised what century it was, the radio station's invitation was rudely declined.

WHEN bullying Ron Davies went on TV to agree publicly that rebel MP Llew Smith *could* oppose the Labour line on Welsh devolution without being dropped into Cardiff Bay in a concrete overcoat, it was another victory for Peter Mandelson — and a humiliating grovel for the thuggish Welsh secretary.

"Honest" Llew had of course campaigned against a Welsh assembly as long ago as the 1970s, when he regularly shared platforms with Neil Kinnock and the then deputy leader of Rhymney Valley council, er, one Ron Davies.

The climbdown could not have been forced upon a nicer man: his track record includes tearing down the Christmas decorations at Annie's Bar in the Common in 1988 while tired and emotional; and, while enraged, putting his hands round the neck of odious Tory Tim Janman, who had to be rescued by then MP Jerry Hayes.

Despite the fun of seeing Davies grovel, loyalists among Wales's 34 Labour MPs believe that Smith, an ultra-Leftie who is frequently out of step with "new" Labour, should have been disciplined *pour encourager les autres*. They have a point as the party's devolution plans for Wales continue to fray at the edges.

Following Smith, Alan Williams (Swansea West) came out against; and veterans Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney), Allan Rogers (Rhondda) and Denzil Davies (Llanelli) have expressed anger that 20 of the 60 assembly members will be elected by proportional representation which they see as a trendy folderol.

In the population at large, meanwhile, opinion is evenly split, according to an HTV poll, with 20 percent still undecided.

THE Labour government's pledge to change the rules which allow convicted paedophiles to move back into society unnoticed should be carried through as soon as possible if one recent case is anything to go by.

Lorna Fitzsimons, the new Labour MP for Rochdale, was unwittingly helped in her election campaign by an extremely dangerous convicted paedophile. Her canvassers only learnt about the past crimes of fellow party helper Graham Stridgeon after seeing national coverage of his case.

Stridgeon had been living in Kirkholt, Rochdale, with his wife Jenny Seddon since his release from prison in April after serving six years of a nine-year sentence for a horrific attack on a ten-year-old girl. The couple volunteered to canvass for Lorna Fitzsimons, who was trying to oust Liberal Democrat Liz Lynne from what had been a Lib Dem stronghold.

Stridgeon was sent out to deliver Labour party leaflets to homes in the town. Also known as Graham Seddon, he was detained by police shortly afterwards in May under the mental health act when they found him in Huyton, Merseyside, carrying a bag of toys. He admitted that he was "looking for a child".

THE NEW GIRLS: 2
Helen Brinton

WITHIN months of being elected as the "new" Labour MP for Peterborough, the

astonishingly ambitious Helen Brinton has come seriously unstuck. She is now of course quite famous, having become a target for ribaldry in the press, and this makes her even more unpopular among her "colleagues" on the Labour backbenches than ever. The old Labour men have even taken to snickering recently at a well-worn photograph allegedly depicting a female Labour MP clad in a tight skirt — but wearing no knickers. It is extremely unlikely to be the single-minded Brinton but the more neanderthal backbenchers are enjoying it in a spirit of Old Labour chauvinism.

She is not however terribly popular with "new" labour either. Despite her robotic sticking to the Mandelson party line, senior Labour figures and those at the Millbank HQ were aghast on 2 May to learn that Brinton, 42, had joined their number. Though she is as "new" Labour as they come, it wasn't always so and she is also something of an unguided missile, frequently missing her targets even when launched in the right direction and her exposure on television has already embarrassed the spin doctors. Known in Labour circles as the "Grim Reaper" for her past penchant for taking an unhealthy interest in Labour MPs suffering serious, life threatening, illnesses, Brinton spent the best part of a decade trying to secure a Labour seat. In 1992 she fought Faversham in Kent as a Kinnock loyalist, and having failed to be elected teamed up with now-exiled Bryan Gould in his ill-starred attempt to get Labour to take unemployment more seriously.

While Gould was courted by the media in the early 1990s, Brinton became national secretary of the Full Employment Forum. But once Gould scuttled back to New Zealand, she unilaterally declared that the forum's interventionist economic approach was "a complete mistake", thus pleasing Gordon Brown and throwing her former comrades into a furious lather.

Her exit from the dismal world of left-wingery came after the death of John Smith when she set herself up as the "Kent Constituencies Coordinator for Tony Blair's Leadership Campaign", a position that took pride of place on her CV, which was by then being transported around the country in a fleet of TNT lorries.

Despite becoming a confirmed Blairite, she also felt the need to belong to lots of organisations not usually associated with "new" Labour. As part of her bid for national recognition she signed up to the Co-op Party; the Transport & General Workers' Union; Labour Economic Strategy Group; Labour Planning Group; Socialist Health Association; World Disarmament Campaign; Labour Action for Peace (a front for CND); Rural Revival; and the Socialist Countryside Group. Unkind observers wonder which leftie groups will be fending for themselves when Brinton follows the Princess of Wales and abandons all but a cherished few "good causes".

A groupie of the "Labour Women's Network", Brinton discovered that the local Peterborough party had fallen victim to the policy of "all-women shortlists" and that the local comrades had reluctantly been obliged to drop their favourite son. Elbowing aside more solid examples of Labour womanhood, Brinton secured the nomination. She endeared herself to locals by handing out piles of Labour pledge cards all tastefully decorated with an oversized picture of herself.

Her Tory opponent Jacqueline Foster (replacing Brian Mawhinney, who had joined the chicken run), ensured the election was catty. Turning up to the same meeting in a local community association, the two circled each other avoiding any verbal contact whatsoever. "She just mouths what Tony Blair tells her to," claimed the feisty Foster, without realising that La Brinton then invariably fluffs the prompts. Foster's claim that Brinton wanted to abolish grant maintained schools, while working for one as a teacher, also fell on deaf ears.

At Westminster Brinton has already been derided for her brown-nosing abilities but no one should underestimate the power of industrial-strength sycophancy. Particularly not with this administration.

'Cassius'

THERE was rejoicing in May when new defence secretary George Robertson announced a ban on the import, export, transfer and operational use of anti-personnel landmines. "Few people in this country could tolerate any longer the continued use in the world of these disgraceful and almost immoral weapons," said Robertson, probably correctly.

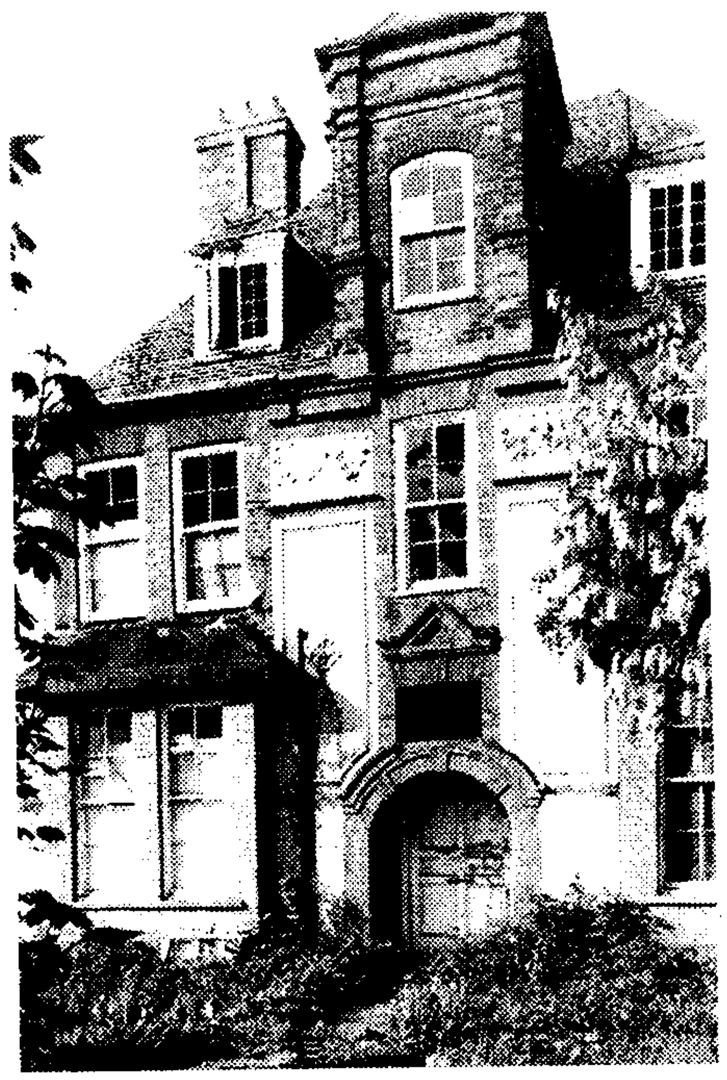
Then, less than a month later, on 16 June, armed forces minister Dr John Reid was already contradicting what his boss had said. It would seem there is not now to be a complete ban on operational use. The moratorium will be suspended if "ministers judge that the security of our armed forces would be jeopardised without the possibility of the use of anti-personnel land mines". Dr Reid said: "It is impossible to predict what such exceptional circumstance might be."

There was a similar charade a year ago from the Tory government when it scuppered international efforts to bring in a complete ban at the UN review conference of the Inhuman Weapons Convention in Geneva (see *Eye* 898). Then the government went back on a declaration that it supported a worldwide ban saying it would keep 56 percent of the present stock to be used in, er, "exceptional circumstances".

" 'scuse me, Dave - have you got a match?"

NOOKS and CORNERS

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL, famous for Philip Larkin, the poet, is not rich in fine and beautiful buildings. There is the parish church and... er, that's about it.



In fact the city is rather a dump thanks to decades of economic decline and a generally useless local authority. But there are *some* remarkable buildings in the city — in particular a unique group of houses in the "Queen Anne" style designed by George Gilbert Scott junior. Typically, after years of neglect, the integrity of this collection is threatened by partial demolition.

Pity poor Scott: he was the one in the middle — son of the great Sir Gilbert, designer of the Albert Memorial, and father of the great Sir Giles, he of Liverpool cathedral and the red telephone box. Though a brilliant man and a fine architect, he went mad and his career collapsed. He died a century ago this year while staying in one of his father's celebrated buildings: the Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras. To add insult to injury, many of Scott's best buildings are no more, making his houses in Hull all the more precious.

E.W. Godwin, the architect who ran off with Ellen Terry, described Scott as a "master and a leader in the 'Queen Anne' revival", and he was responsible for a handful of buildings in the new eclectic domestic style. In Hull, in 1876, he designed a symmetrical group of houses in three streets in the centre of the Westbourne Park area for his cousin, John Spyvee Cooper, who was acting for the developer Garbutt. Partly of red brick, with fancy gables, ornamental towers and Classical details like garlands cast in cement panels, these are different from "Queen Anne" houses by, say, Norman Shaw. They are now listed grade II.

This, however, has not stopped them from being neglected and mutilated. Cut up into bed-sits, several have lost ornamental details. One house — 7 Salisbury Street — partly collapsed six years ago and had to be repossessed by the city council. This has been well restored; but other houses — under one ownership — have been rather less well restored and two, 107 & 109 Park Avenue, are still alarmingly derelict. The Buildings at Risk Trust was willing to take these on and repair them, but instead they have been sold to Chablis Associates of Swanland — who have put in for listed building consent to demolish 109 Park Avenue.

The house is certainly a mess and has been attacked by an arsonist, but an engineer from the city considers that it is not in danger of collapse and the Buildings at Risk Trust says it has seen far worse. In fact, the real reason Plonk Associates [sic] want to demolish it is to provide car-parking space for the flats they propose at 107.

If a house in a symmetrical terrace were proposed for demolition, it would be unthinkable. Destroying one of Scott's special houses in a symmetrical group is almost as bad. So what will Kingston-upon-Hull city council do to prevent this nonsense?

ON 1 JULY David Rock took over as president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Who he?

Rock planned the University of Surrey and founded the firm of Rock Townsend in 1971. Unfortunately a press release tells us that "David was elected by the RIBA membership last December and has spent much of the time since talking to the 'design heroes' of the profession, such as Sir Norman Foster, Lord Rogers, Nicholas Grimshaw..." Yawn, yawn. He might be Tony Blair, except that David has a beard. Has he nothing better to do?

To be charitable, after Owen "Sod You" Luder, whose election for a second term as president suggested that architects are even more stupid and philistine than we supposed, anybody would be an improvement. At least he seems to design his own buildings...

'Piloti'

THE TORIES – REMEMBER THEM?

IT MAY be just as well John Redwood failed in his quest to be Tory party leader: the Vulcan is not quite the squeaky clean ideologue of popular perception.

While "Honest John" is under attack for being the only Tory leadership candidate who refused to identify donors to his campaign fund, the *Eye* has discovered that in the last government Redwood faced a serious conflict of interests of which even his pro-Europe Tory enemies were unaware.

While he was minister for corporate affairs, his wife Gail was company secretary to British Airways and an adviser to Lord King. She was also a director of 15 travel and aviation companies, four of which were BA subsidiaries.

Between 1989 and 1992, Redwood was the department of trade (DTI) minister responsible for competition and company policy. In 1991, BA made a bid for Dan Air for a notional sum plus £35 million of the company's debts. Although there was a clear case for a referral to the monopolies and mergers commission, the DTI allowed BA to go ahead with the takeover — to the delight of the BA board which was advised by the minister's wife... one Gail Redwood.

The *Eye* has obtained internal BA memos written by Gail Redwood which show her direct involvement in BA's lobbying of government. These relate to a proposed investment in US Air, and the minister's wife was very conscious of the political implications. "The support of the Secretary of State for Transport for our proposed investment is plainly uppermost in our minds," she wrote in a memo to the board and Lord King. Under the heading of "Political Backdrop", she adds: "Keeping the goodwill of the Department of Transport... is important". But her most interesting memo is headed "Regulatory Framework" in which Gail Redwood states:

"We have received written confidential guidance from the Office of Fair Trading (part of the DTI) that it will not recommend a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission by the President of the Board of Trade".

Although this was written after her husband left the DTI, it shows that Gail Redwood had been dealing intimately with that department on BA matters. And who was the DTI minister responsible for competition policy for much of that time? Her husband, John Redwood.

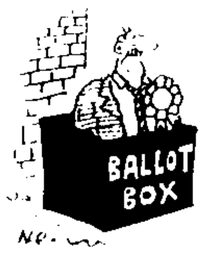
While Gail remains BA's company secretary, her husband is now back on the frontbench as a senior shadow cabinet minister. Can *Eye* readers guess which portfolio? Redwood accepted... trade and industry.

IT'S probably a good job no one is now listening to the Tories any more: their foreign policy statements are likely to be at sixes and sevens.

The appointment of David Faber, MP for Westbury, as an adviser to Michael Howard in the shadow foreign policy team, will be good news in Pale. As vice-chair of the UK-Yugoslavia parliamentary group under Bob Wareing, Faber took a distinctly pro-Serbian line.

Those in Serb-occupied Bosnia may be less pleased, however, to hear that Sir Patrick Cormack, MP for South Staffs, is now helping Gillian Shephard, shadow leader of the Commons. Cormack is a patron of the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Meanwhile Iain Duncan Smith, who read and actually understood Noel Malcolm's *Bosnia: A Short History* and then tried in May 1995 to pin down an evasive Tony Blair on whether he supported lifting the arms embargo or not (as Malcolm did), will be *hors combat* at shadow social services.



JOBWATCH

LADY Lynda Chalker, former caring-sharing minister for overseas development, is one of the first former ministers to shoot into big-time consultancy.

She has been taken on by the World Bank, where her expertise will be useful in shielding the bank from the continual sniping of organisations like Oxfam who suspect the bank's obsession with the laws of the free market actually increases the world poverty it is meant to alleviate.

● THE barristers' chambers of the Rt Hon Douglas Hogg QC, former secretary of state for agriculture, announce that Hogg is "back in full-time employment" as a barrister. Er, this comes as news to the electors of Sleaford and North Hykeham, who thought Hogg was already working flat out for them as their constituency MP.

'Backbiter'

EYE TV

The Hong Kong Handover

(All channels)

NEWS and current affairs journalists are not famous for their sense of humour. But the coverage of the return of Hong Kong to the Chinese contained a brilliant — if rather expensive and self-indulgent — running gag.

In Hong Kong, the word handover denotes the colony's change of rule. But, in television and radio, a handover is the process by which a presenter designates the airwaves to a co-presenter or to a reporter at an outside location. So the lads of broadcast journalism came up with a brilliant structural gag in which the coverage of the Hong Kong Handover would consist solely of a series of ludicrous and unjustified handovers between staff.

So, on the *Nine O'Clock News* (BBC1), Peter Sissons in London handed over to Michael Buerk in Hong Kong who handed over to Ben Brown in Hong Kong who handed over to Humphrey Hawkesley in Tiananmen Square. Elsewhere on BBC radio and television, Sue McGregor in London handed over to James Naughtie in Hong Kong; Kirsty Wark in London to Peter Snow in Hong Kong to Mark Urban in another bit of Hong Kong; Chris Lowe in London handed over to Charlie Lee-Potter in Hong Kong; and John Tusa in one bit of Hong Kong handed over to Brian Hanrahan down the road in another bit and Eric Robson up the road in a third bit.

Also in on the great handover pun, ITN had Julia Somerville in London handing over to Trevor McDonald in Hong Kong who handed over to Michael Nicholson in another bit of Hong Kong. Channel 4 News had Kathy Smith in London handing over to Jon Snow in Hong Kong.

All of the British broadcasters were guilty of ludicrous overkill in their coverage of an event which consisted of about five significant (or, anyway, poignant) minutes at midnight and hours before that of sub-Olympic-opening dancing and singing bollocks. But the BBC's coverage matters most because it is answerable for its expenditure to the public rather than to shareholders.

Square Eyes has already criticised (*Eye* 911) the BBC's pointlessly mob-handed coverage of a 1996 presidential election which had been a foregone conclusion for months. But, even by those standards, the Hong Kong coverage was a scandalous waste of resources. One hundred and eighty BBC personnel (some of them merely observing) were flown to and accommodated in the world's most expensive city. The list above of the presenters dispatched there doesn't even include Justin Webb of *Breakfast Time* and Peter Allen and Eddie Mair of Radio 5 Live, who also joined the junket. Quite why the *Nine O'Clock News* had to be presented from Hong Kong — when all Buerk did was read links to reports from elsewhere — is a matter of considerable mystery.

One of the reasons for the BBC's ludicrous retinue was — despite Birt's claims to have streamlined the corporation — a typical BBC departmental stand-off. Although obviously a news story, Hong Kong qualifies in BBC terms as a Live Outside Broadcast/Special Event. The head of this section, Philip S. Gilbert, hates News & Current Affairs and so rejected NCA's designated presenter, David Dimbleby, in favour of his old mucker John Tusa, a retired broadcaster who now manages the Barbican Centre.

This had three consequences. The first was that BBC viewers had to cope with a venerable presenter who seemed to be a bit autocue-rusty and struggling with the jet-lag. The second was that — in order to keep its NCA prima donnas happy — dozens of presenters were flown out to Hong Kong but allowed no part in the bulk of the coverage.

The third result was at least amusing. Tusa is an arch-enemy of Birt's, who has regularly appeared over the years as a critic of the reforms and an alternative director-general. Much is made of Birt's alleged Stalinesque grip on the organisation but, as this example shows, the truth is that there is still so much duplication and bureaucracy at the BBC that the director-general and editor-in-chief was unable to prevent a supposed showcase of the organisation's journalism being hosted by a man who has regularly called for the DG's removal.

This time, the BBC's repetition and over-spending are likely to have serious consequences. Gordon Brown last week hinted heavily that he would seek to overturn the five-year licence-fee deal agreed with the Major government, which allows for the first above-inflation increase in recent times. Brown's objection is that the BBC cannot justify more income when its coverage of politics at least is ridiculously mob-handed.

Ministers complain of the experience of being interviewed by anything up to six BBC reporters on the same story and of the system by which (because of the rivalry between BBC political editor Robin Oakley and his deputy John Seargent) both usually ask questions at major press conferences.

Brown's fulminations came before the Hong Kong coverage. So God only knows what the Uncle-Tom-Cobbley presentation of that event did to his view of the corporation's alleged poverty. Those other handover ceremonies — when the government passes on the licence fees collected — may now, because of NCA's arrogant miscalculation, have a poignancy which the BBC did not intend.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

FRANCES-ANNE SOLOMON must be one of the most talented and versatile women in broadcasting.

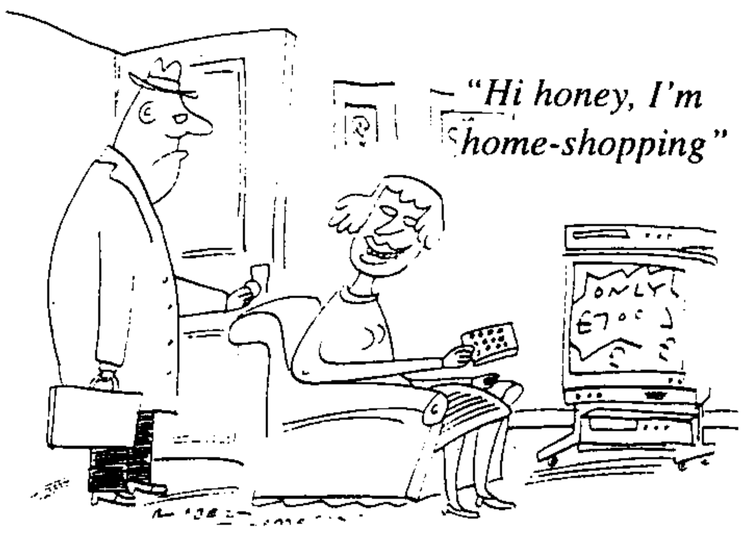
While employed by the BBC TV drama department as an executive producer, she is also working for Channel 4's drama boss Robin Gutch sifting through proposals for a new C4 series of short films called "Outcasts".

On top of all this, she somehow finds the time to run her own independent production company — which has just won a million-pound commission from, er, the BBC TV drama department.

A few months ago, wearing her BBC hat, Solomon commissioned the development of a script titled *Speak Like a Child*. The BBC was so impressed by the idea that it decided to go ahead with the film, which is to be a co-production with the British Film Institute, and awarded the lucrative contract to an outside production company, Leda Serene Ltd — of which la Solomon just happens to be a director. Shooting begins next month.

As if that weren't enough good fortune for anyone, Solomon has now won the lottery as well: on top of all the money invested in the project by her employers at the BBC, two weeks ago the Arts Council awarded £433,896 of lottery loot to the project.

Speak Like a Child, set in Northumberland, is about three young people whose lives become "suffocatingly entwined". Given her many and various professional interests, Solomon is clearly just the person to do justice to the story.



LORD Hollick, boss of United News and Media, which runs Anglia, Meridian and HTV, as well as the *Express* newspapers, has been ruthlessly eliminated, as they used to say in Moscow, from the list of advisers to the department of trade and industry (DTI).

The first new issue of the standard reference work, *Parliamentary Companion*, omits his name. The remarkable official explanation is that this is because "he is not a formal paid adviser. He is informal and not paid". But Lord Simon (ex-BP), who is also assisting the DTI in its inquiries and who is also unpaid, *is* listed.

The *Eye* anticipated this sort of difficulty (926). It is a good thing the government has declared itself so firmly against sleaze, otherwise nasty thoughts might arise. It will be even more difficult to make Hollick vanish if, one day soon, he is involved in major takeover and merger activities to reduce competition and encourage the tendency towards monopoly in television and newspapers.

I-BSkyB

Jubilant Sky bosses believe the Tyson-Holyfield Judgement Night 2 has broken all records for pay-for-view TV in Britain... The Fight With Bite — shown live and exclusively on Sky TV at 4.30am on Sunday — confirms the station as THE sports channel in this country.

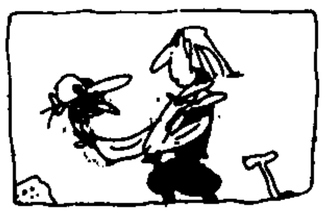
VIKKI ORVICE, Sun news story

MORE rank stupidity from the Birtian Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), whose music recording studio was transferred from Shepherds Bush to a state-of-the-art, purpose-built complex at TV Centre in 1990.

The trade press greatly praised the studio, which could handle a full orchestra and had the most sophisticated recording console in the world, the Neve Capricorn, whatever that is. Er, and then came along Birt's brainchild, of Producer Choice...

Suddenly the new studio, known as TMS, had to become commercially viable. BBC producers, whose music budgets were now cut to the bone, started to look at less expert but significantly cheaper options outside the BBC. Moreover, TMS found it very hard to act as a commercial company with the restraints imposed on it as a part of the BBC. One small example was the bureaucratic nightmare of getting full orchestras provided with parking and security passes simply to enter the building.

Gradually the studio became less and less used, as is the Birtian way. TMS has now been shut down, staff made redundant and the equipment dispersed around the corporation. The BBC's recording facility is now a converted ice rink in Maida Vale where the acoustics are pisspoor and equipment not a patch on that of TMS.



LUVVIES

Ben Kingsley: We discover every day that we work on this play [Waiting for Godot] that it is much bigger than it was yesterday.

Alan Howard: Infinite.

Ben Kingsley: There are circles within circles. The circles are as big as the theatre, as big as London, and then they start to nudge the stars.

BEN KINGSLEY/ALAN HOWARD
Guardian

Submitted by D. Heyes.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

"WE ARE looking for a top-level Personal Assistant to work with Rod Lynch, Chief Executive, BBC Resources," announces a sits vac advert in *Ariel*, the BBC staff newspaper.

It is less than a year since this vacancy last occurred. On that occasion, 32-year-old Adele Harper beat off hot competition to get the job — only to be suspended eight weeks later when it transpired that she was Lynch's mistress. She was kept at home on full pay, protected from prying tabloid hacks by burly BBC minders and ferried around in her lover's chauffeur-driven limo.

After receiving a grilling from corporation chiefs, however, the gruesome Lynch realised that his own job might be endangered: he promptly and gallantly ditched la Harper and flew off to Florida on Concorde for a golfing holiday. After that, while his ex-mistress stayed at home collecting her salary, her job was filled by a succession of temps.

Now it seems a permanent appointment is imminent. According to the *Ariel* ad, necessary qualifications for the job include "interpersonal skills" and "discretion". Quite so.

THE HACKWATCH *Mirror*

FOR a month after the general election, the *Mirror*'s masthead carried the slogan "Loyal to Labour, Loyal to You". Since 31 May, however, the line has been amended to "We Tell It Like It Is".

Does this signify an attempt by the *Mirror* to reassert its journalistic independence — a recognition, perhaps, that slavish loyalty to Labour might sometimes conflict with its loyalty to the truth? As the *Mirror* warned the government on the morning after election day, "there may be times when we disagree".

And, then again, there may not...

1 May: "Tony Blair is an amazing man and an astonishing politician... Just vote for him. He will do the rest."

5 May: "Things are already getting better... Who can tell what triumphs lie ahead? Remember — England only wins the World Cup under Labour. A better Britain. We can do it."

9 May: "The Prime Minister who brings lasting peace to Northern Ireland will write his name in history." And that Prime Minister is... Tony Blair.

17 May: Another *Mirror* leader on Northern Ireland is headed "Bold New Champion of Peace". No prizes for guessing the champion's identity: Tony Blair's address to Belfast businessmen yesterday is modestly hailed as "the most important [speech] by a Premier this century".

19 May: Mohammed Sarwar stands accused of attempting to bribe a rival candidate during the general election. Miraculously, even this sleazy embarrassment is somehow turned to Labour's advantage: "We can all remember how John Major reacted when Tory MPs were caught up in sex or money scandals. He dithered. He allowed them to hang on by their grubby fingertips. *Not so Tony Blair. The most striking hallmark of his government is the speed with which it gets things done. The Sarwar affair is no exception.*"

20 May: Labour's ban on tobacco sponsorship of sport "will hit cricket, motor racing and snooker for millions", the *Mirror* notes, rather disloyally. But it swiftly comes back on-message: "The government is right to insist on this ban."

23 May: England's cricketers have won a one-day international against Australia. "G'day? It's a great day," the paper drools. "Three weeks into a Labour government and it seems there's nothing that can't be done."

31 May: Another thoughtful assessment: "Short of finding a cure for every known illness, Blair's Premiership could not have had a more exciting beginning."

3 June: "Remember the time. Remember the place. June 2, 1997, on the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark. This run-down area is not the place where you expect history to be made. *But Tony Blair's speech there yesterday could herald the start of a new welfare system...* He wants to give opportunity and hope to millions, not just a few."

6 June: "It was great to be British yesterday as our hero cricketers bowled out the Aussies for a pitiful 118 runs in the first Test... You can feel it in the air, a sense of optimism and hope that at last something wonderful is happening to our country. Tony Blair was revealed yesterday as the most popular Premier in Britain's history. He promised he'd make things better — and he has already. *So make the most of it. Get up this morning, smile, give a little cheer and do something positive. The Great is back in Britain.*"

7 June: "Tony Blair is determined to shake up Europe just as he shook up Labour and is shaking up Britain. *He is already becoming a world leader.*"

18 June: "The Millennium Dome is, depending on who you listen to, either the biggest waste of money in history or a potentially shining monument to this great country. The *Mirror* was unimpressed when it was first proposed..." But now, of course, we have a Labour government, so the Dome is no longer a wicked Tory Dome. "It is a fantastic landmark... If it could truly pay for itself AND be a wonderful year-long celebration of this great country of ours, why not? Mr Blair doesn't need to look very far. Wouldn't his brilliant minister without portfolio, Peter Mandelson, be just the man for this challenge?"

16 June: Tony Blair attends his first EU summit. "Other heads of state, who have been given a preview of what is coming, have been shocked by his boldness... *But he is doing the right thing. Sooner or later, the rest of them will realise that.*"

19 June: For the benefit of readers who haven't caught up, the *Mirror* reminds us why everything is so glorious. "It isn't just that Labour has a huge majority. *It is that Tony Blair has a vision and a programme for a new Britain.*"

20 June: "Let there be no more complaints, moans or quibbles. The Millennium Dome is going to be built... *The Millennium Dome must be a symbol of the new Britain Tony Blair is creating.*"

24 June: The *Mirror* broadens its horizons. "It is a big enough challenge sorting out the mess the world is in today. Trying to prevent it getting worse in the future is even bigger... *But Tony Blair is absolutely right to insist that it must be done.*"

23 June: Tony Banks has proposed that ballroom dancing become an Olympic sport. "As Minister for Sport, Tony Banks is proving a revelation," the *Mirror* gushes. "*What an amazing man.*"

27 June: "It has taken eight years but at last we may learn the truth about what happened at Hillsborough... Hopefully the new inquiry will discover the truth. But it is a triumph that it is being held at all. *A triumph for Jack Straw...*"

28 June: Will the *Mirror*, which has been so scathing about fat-cats, join the chorus of disapproval at the £9m commission to agent Mark McCormack for his work on the Millennium Exhibition? Er, no. "Dome Secretary Peter Mandelson wants the Greenwich show to be the most exciting event of its kind anywhere in the world," it explains. "*If you don't want monkeys, don't pay peanuts.*"

30 June: Two Labour ministers are revealed to have enjoyed a freebie with Radovan Karadzic, the well-known war criminal. "New Labour's bashers are going to have to do better than this," the *Mirror* snorts. "*The trip was work, not play.*" How odd that it didn't think of the same justification for Jonathan Aitken's weekend at the Paris Ritz.

1 July: "Yes, it was sad to see Hong Kong pass to China. But none of us who watched that final ceremony could fail to feel proud to be British..." Who deserves the credit? "*Under the leadership of Tony Blair, it could be the start of a new respect for Britain in the world.*"

2 July: "Never has a Chancellor had so much expected of him on Budget Day as Gordon Brown has today," the *Mirror* observes — and, without waiting for the details, delivers its pre-emptive verdict: "*We know he will not fail.*"

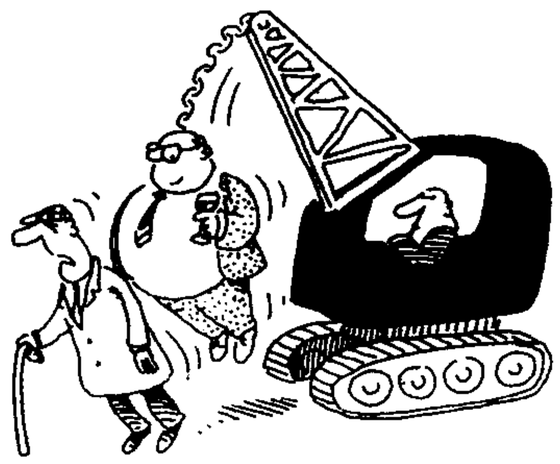
3 July: "This was, quite simply, a brilliant Budget... *It was great, Gordon. A great Budget for a new Great Britain.*" With startling originality, the editorial is headlined "New Labour, New Britain!"

MORALE at the BBC is being boosted by the sensitivity of middle managers — like one M. Read, boss of the transmission managers at TV Centre, who memoed his underlings asking for their holiday requests to be handed in quickly.

He pointed out that as it is the peak of the summer "leave for these published weeks is becoming very difficult indeed... Any more leave for these published weeks is therefore unlikely."

If this creates complications, however, Mr Read's door is always open. As he told staff: "I'll be back from Italy to deal with any problems in three weeks' time."

"There's not much of a plot, but the visuals are state of the art"



Rotten Boroughs

Islington

A TALE of compassion from Islington, spiritual home of caring "new" Labour, where an epileptic wheelchair user applied, on the recommendation of his doctor, to have a shower installed at his council home.

The man needs the shower because he lives alone and, his doctor fears, if he ever had a fit while in the bath he could drown.

Islington council accepted this and told the man he would have his shower within six months. Now, however, he has learnt that the work is being delayed until next year, along with a big backlog of jobs, because the social services budget has been cut so severely.

Happily, however, the budget has not been cut so severely that the council cannot afford pay the Capita consultancy a £40,000 fee for having dreamt up ways to improve local neighbourhood services, including social services and housing.

Capita came up with the usual streamlining stuff: ie cut jobs, one of which will be that of Jean Dolphin, director of neighbourhood services. She is not too worried that the report makes her job obsolete: she is rumoured to have a large pay-off waiting, calculated on the basis of her £62,000 salary and years of service.

Meanwhile shower-less epileptic wheelchair users and others who are awaiting social services will no doubt wish her well in retirement.

Red Face of the Week

DONALD McLEOD has resigned hurriedly as chair of the arts and leisure committee of Western Isles council — shortly before he was due to face charges relating to his own leisure time.

At Stornoway sheriff's court, McLeod, a former convenor (chairman) of the council, pleaded guilty to three charges of drink driving and one of careless driving in November and December last year. He also admitted assaulting his wife by hitting her with a wooden axe handle.

The assault came after a two-day drinking binge following his release on bail on the original driving charges. He was given a ten-month jail sentence and banned from driving for eight years.

HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE: In his earlier fight for the convenorship, McLeod came clean about a conviction for assaulting a policeman saying: "Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future."

Latest Appointments

THE new Warrington unitary authority used the pricey recruitment consultants Touche Deloittes to help find a new £70,000-a-year chief executive.

On the final shortlist of 12, 11 candidates were serving local government officers, including some chief execs from other councils. So who got the job? Warrington gave it to the only candidate with *no* experience of running a major local government department — Stephen Broomhead, principal of the Warrington Collegiate Institute.

Coincidentally, Warrington council leader John Gartside, who chaired the appointment panel, is a director of the college's external relations department.

In Lambeth, meanwhile, Christmas came early for 15 finance staff who left the council last month with severance deals of more than £3,000 each and no obligation to work their 90-day notice periods. Planning at the town hall was such, however, that the cock-up prone council immediately had to hire replacements from an employment agency, Finance & Data Management Ltd.

It dutifully supplied Lambeth with... its very own recently departed staff. Within ten days of "leaving" Lambeth, the 15 were back at their desks enjoying salary rises of up to 25 percent. The rises were justified because the staff had, er, previous experience of working for Lambeth.

Knowsley

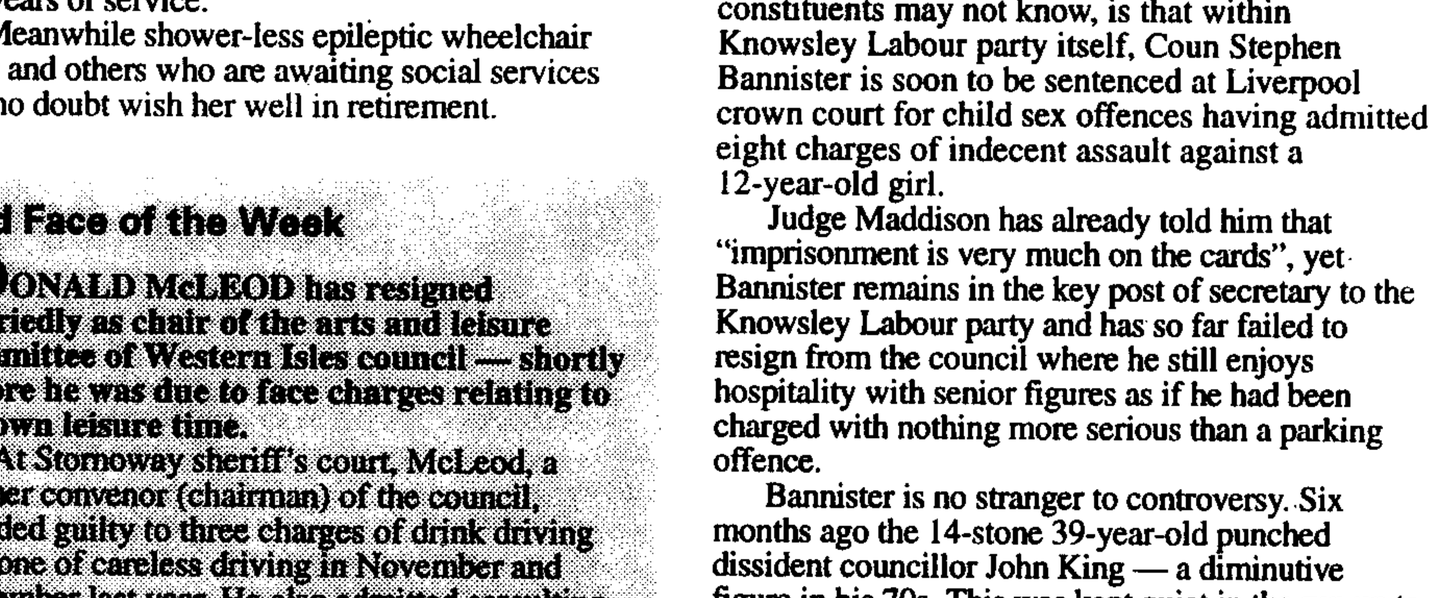
WHEN a convicted paedophile was arrested carrying a bag of toys on the streets of Huyton, locals were understandably worried — especially after the man admitted his urge to reoffend — and they duly besieged Knowsley town hall.

Local Labour MP Eddie O' Hara responded by calling on home secretary Jack Straw to tighten the law on releasing paedophiles into the community once their sentence is served. What O'Hara's constituents may not know, is that within Knowsley Labour party itself, Coun Stephen Bannister is soon to be sentenced at Liverpool crown court for child sex offences having admitted eight charges of indecent assault against a 12-year-old girl.

Judge Maddison has already told him that "imprisonment is very much on the cards", yet Bannister remains in the key post of secretary to the Knowsley Labour party and has so far failed to resign from the council where he still enjoys hospitality with senior figures as if he had been charged with nothing more serious than a parking offence.

Bannister is no stranger to controversy. Six months ago the 14-stone 39-year-old punched dissident councillor John King — a diminutive figure in his 70s. This was kept quiet in the run up to the general election. He has held important posts such as vice-chairman of education and chairman of the influential general purposes committee until last May, and as such has been a supporter of Jim Keight OBE, the 71-year-old council leader. Keight has yet to comment on Bannister's future.

Knowsley is an "old" Labour dominated rotten borough par excellence, and more scandals and court appearances involving councillors are expected before the year is out. Watch this space...



Pseuds Corner

Cornelia Parker, who has thrown objects from the White Cliffs of Dover, and once exhibited an exploded garden shed, said: "My work is about the dematerialisation of the moment. My work's all about not being precise, about not being fixed. I'm a sort of maverick, I come at the whole thing at a bit of a tangent. I'm hopefully in the mainstream."

The Guardian

The guitars echo the things and presences which furnish the world, the guitars are a fluctuating matrix for intangible Verlainian energies, the guitars are guitars in the way that guitars are guitars and sometimes they're not.

One of the things I love about Radiohead is the way Yorke is buried soul deep in these drastic and radiant guitars.

PAUL MORLEY
Uncut Magazine

Pop CD of the Week
The Prodigy, The Fat of the Land (XL), £14.49

Completely, absolutely, gobsmackingly dazzling.

This, people, is Mozart at the wheel of a monster truck. It's Earthquake directed by the Coen brothers. It is pure pleasure siphoned from the adrenal gland and shot into the cerebral cortex through a titanium syringe. It is not just good, it's so good that it's impossible to take it in all at once. Just let your jaw hang slack for a while. This is rock'n'roll as it now stands. When it gets into the pool, everything else leaves in a hurry. Including the water. It is The Fat Of The Land, the album that ate the world. This thing is Godzilla with The Funk. It is a brand new Greatest Hits album from a band whose form was already blinding. It will blow your mind and grind the pieces into the carpet under its size 14 boots. I like it.

DAVID BENNUN
The Guardian

Helen Storey, the fashion designer, is joining forces with her sister Kate, a developmental biologist, to produce her first collection since her business collapsed in 1995. The clothes, based on the development of the human embryo, will be presented during London Fashion Week this autumn. The sisters have received a £25,000 grant as part of a new scheme by the Wellcome Trust, aiming to bring scientists and artists together.

The Times

Bulloch, who was born in Canada but lives and works in London, makes pieces using mechanical and electronic devices, as well as bean bags. Marina Vaizey, one of the judges, said: "She is terribly involved with life as it is lived now. She's even done things with pedestrian crossings and Belisha beacons."

The Guardian

In fixing on the pigeon Weston metaphorises a middle class anxiety. He imports the object of that unease into the art gallery in disguise, as it were, and confronts the viewer with his or her other. Weston's metonymic substitution of pigeons for workers allow him to internalise a disturbing presence into middle class space without having to rely on the kind of anthropological voyeurism of much documentary photography.

Publicity for "Pigeon" Exhibition
by Geoff Weston

CONTRIBUTORS: Peter Barnes, Francis Harvey, A.M. Oakley, Judith Rodden, Peter Barnes, John Bewley, Anon.

£10 paid for entries.

Letters

Pen names

Sir,

Your claim (The New Boys: EYE *927) that I authored "The John Bercow Guide to Understanding Women" is wrong. The facts are as follows:*

In April 1986, shortly before the Federation of Conservative Students Annual Conference at which I was seeking election as chairman, the magazine known as ARMAGEDDON *(written in a vein similar to* PRIVATE EYE*) was published. I penned an article entitled "The Future of Thatcherism" which appeared under the heading "Blue Wedge". I saw no other part of the magazine before its publication. Unbeknown to me, one of those preparing the contents decided, as a prank, to put in another article as well. This was the tawdry and juvenile drivel to which you refer. I gather that it was intended as gentle mockery of my alleged lack of success with members of the opposite sex that year. I thought it was in very poor taste.*

The editor of ARMAGEDDON *informed me at the time that the article was lifted directly from a book of so called humour obtainable in The General Store in Covent Garden. In eager pursuit of the evidence, I went to The General Store and obtained a copy, demonstrating to Lambeth NALGO and the* SOUTH LONDON PRESS *that I was not the author. Doubtless* PRIVATE EYE *will now be content to acknowledge the same.*

Yours faithfully,
JOHN BERCOW MP,
House of Commons.

Cut and thrust

Sir,

We will ignore the factual inaccuracies in your article (Murkeyside, EYE *926). It is however sad that the knives appear to be out in establishment circles not involved in, or wanting to see the success of, initiatives between Liverpool city council and progressive businesses eager to attract investment to our city.*

Our sponsorship of Liverpool's film office has significantly assisted Liverpool in its efforts to attract film activity to our city as will be seen when a further major announcement is made within the next few weeks. The source of your incorrect information appears to have invented a conspiracy that does not exist and Frank Prendergast will continue to get the legal advice to which he is entitled in defending the libel claim against him.

Yours truly,
BERMANS SOLICITORS,
Liverpool.

Small talk

Sir,

With reference to the lookalike between a teletubby and former Tory cabinet minister and new leader of the party William Hague. How could anyone mistake somebody who has been accused of talking complete nonsense and having a detrimental effect on children's education, with an innocent character from a popular children's television show?

Yours faithfully,
MIKE LLOYD,
Uttoxeter, Staffs.

JET engine

Sir,

After reading the latest copy of the EYE *I decided to look for the JET report on the internet. Fortunately it is quite easy to find. This page has a list of other mirror sights for it:*
http://www.xs4ll.nl/~yaman/jetrep.htm

JON BURTON,
Via e-mail.

Tate's gallery

Sir,

*I see that Satan hunter Tim Tate is making lists again (*EYE *927). His holier-than-thou assurances do nothing to assuage the fears of people who have suffered his "little research", such as police inspector Cole who was lampooned for his disbelief of satanic involvement in the Nottingham case and to whom Tate eventually had to apologise and pay damages.*

Or in my case being portrayed on Tate's COOK REPORT *as a key figure in the promotion of satanic abuse in the UK. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission said that the* COOK REPORT *had treated me unfairly and had not made clear that I had nothing whatsoever to do with any form of child abuse. Lawyers for Central TV agreed but Tate still included me in his book on satanic abuse anyway.*

Ask him, if you will, what happened to the 20 cases of satanic abuse which his "little research" featured in the COOK REPORT *and why, in the course of time, every single one of them evaporated entirely, revealing no satanic abuse whatsoever?*

There has never been **any** *case which has successfully proven the allegations of satanic abuse which Tate has promoted. He quotes the Telford case but even under the inquisitors' elastic parameters, it qualifies only as "ritual abuse". The terms satanic and "ritual" are used interchangeably by the Satan hunters whenever they can get away with it but they mean distinctly different things.*

In the backlash after the Rochdale disaster they denied ever using the term "satanic abuse" and dropped all mention of pan-global satanic conspiracies against children.

Yours sincerely,
CHRISTOPHER M. BRAY,
The Sorcerer's Apprentice Bookshop, Leeds.

Tate and libel

Sir,

May I add one or two responses regarding Tim Tate's letter about satanic ritual abuse?

Mr Tate says he played "a very minor role" in the Nottingham case. In fact he brought its "satanic ritual" allegation to national attention through television's COOK REPORT *and his own book* CHILDREN FOR THE DEVIL, *a text still widely recommended in professional child-care quarters. When he describes the JET report as "libellous" readers might like to note Mr Tate himself was sued for libel by Nottingham police officer Det Supt Peter Coles for his untrue accusations in* CHILDREN FOR THE DEVIL.

Further, the claim that "the first successful prosecution of adults for sexually abusing children during satanic rituals took place in Telford, Shropshire, in 1982" contradicts CHILDREN FOR THE DEVIL, *where Mr Tate cites the medieval trial of Gilles de Rais as "the first specific proven case of satanic ritual child abuse" (p.66). Mr Tate's amnesia is perhaps explicable by reviewers pointing out the "confessions" were extracted under torture. At least we have some idea of the kind of testimony that convinces Mr Tate of satanic ritual abuse's existence.*

Finally, Mr Tate's griping at "claptrap from the tabloids" overlooks the fact that, as will already be clear, he and his contemporaries were given free reign to air their speculations in the mainstream media. It was only when the evidence supporting satanic ritual abuse failed to materialise did reporters turn sceptical, a position vindicated by independent and thorough investigations by, among others, Professor Jean La Fontaine in Britain alongside the FBI and National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in America. Most distressing of all, those who are still chasing the shadow of satanic ritual abuse are failing to catch the genuine child sex offenders.

Yours sincerely,
PETER WARD,
BARRISTER,
London.

Bea in her bonnet

Sir,

Journalists Nick Anning, David Hebdige and Margaret Jervis finally foisted their conspiracy theories about the Broxtowe ritual abuse case on the EYE *(13 June). Their sources, the discredited Joint Enquiry Team (JET) report and Nottingham police, claim that children were brainwashed by evangelical cards and social workers. This has already been rejected by the county council and the courts — indeed their professionalism has been commended as "exemplary", and the children's evidence put nine of their parents in prison.*

Compare and contrast with John Gwatkin, a JET member who, as area manager of Newark social services, refused to heed concerns that a client might be harming her children. The poor woman was later convicted of murder. Undaunted he lends his "expertise" to the accused adults' movement, the False Memory Syndrome Society. So does Professor Elizabeth Newson who, with her husband John Newson, first fielded the brainwashing theory (supported by the police). John Newson admitted in my DISPATCHES *documentary on the case that he had not seen the children's evidence.*

It was a judge — not social workers or carers — who described the abuse as "satanic". That view was confirmed by the appeal court.

Children's accounts of organised and ritualised abuse pointed to other children at risk. The police responded by threatening to discredit the social workers. In a satellite case police appeared for **the defence**, *the accused parents. The judge preferred the children's evidence. The court also rejected the JET report.*

The EYE *claims that in 1988 US "satanic indicators were distributed to foster carers who 'interrogated' children". Wrong, wrong, wrong. The children were taken into care in 1987 and had* **already** *described their parents and others dressing up and abusing them.*

BEATRIX CAMPBELL.
Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Lookalike

Edwina Currie

Fatima

Sir,

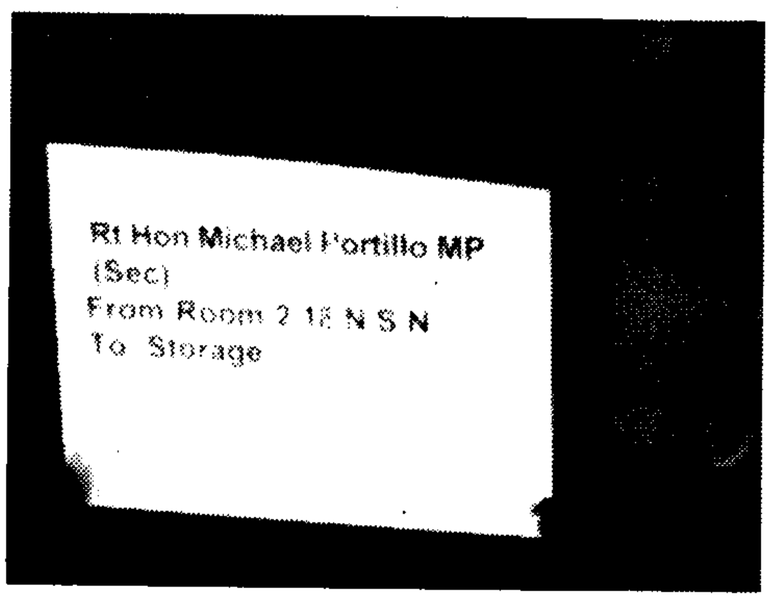
Has anybody seen the strange similarity between Fatima the reconstructed Egyptian Mummy and Edwina Currie — the former MP and authoress?

Perhaps there is something in reincarnation after all — I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT CALDICOTT,
Eccles, Nr. Manchester.

"I don't doubt the appropriateness of the location, but I'm afraid we are one of the few locations in the Municipality not yet registered for the sanctification of your impending marriage"

I-SPY



Submitted by Anon. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Field events

Sir,

Congratulations on your long-overdue article on the baffling proposals to resite the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital out in a field at Colney (Doing the Rounds, EYE *927).*

You surmise that consultants from the hospital might be in favour of the move "...to be near the University". Whilst this may be true, might they not also benefit from being just round the corner **from the frigging BUPA hospital** *which is already well-established at Colney?*

Things aren't always complicated, y'know.

Yours currently in good health, and desperately hoping to stay that way,
IAN HARRIS,
Norwich.

PS: That huge car park sounds like a bit of a moneyspinner, doesn't it? Assuming they charge for parking, who gets the profits?

Stroke victims

Sir,

Your mention of Kent in the latest edition of Rotten Boroughs is so wide of the mark factually as to be almost laughable.

You state that the new Conservative administration has cut all financial support for students attending further education colleges by a stroke: we have not touched these at all. You state that attacks on school transport, libraries, museums and social services are expected to follow: in fact, we are now honouring our pledge to the electorate of reinstating cuts implemented by the previous Lib/Lab administration and these include increasing the opening hours of libraries.

I feel it is unfair to mention people's salaries especially if you are again so wide of the mark with the figure. We are currently advertising for a new chief executive when the total of any salary will be £125,000, a far step from your mention of £200,000.

Rest assured there has not been, nor will there be, any grandiose refurbishment of County Hall. Many of the fine paintings you mentioned as being in the building are in fact part of the Knatchbull collection which is on loan to the county council so the public can come in and see it. They certainly have not been bought by the council.

As far as senior executives enjoying the best food and finest wines, we have a staff canteen which everybody uses although I have to say it is rare these days to see any chief officer in there as, along with many other staff and councillors, they are usually grabbing a sandwich before wrestling with the budget problems we have inherited from the previous administration.

All in all, this was a pretty tawdry, inaccurate, misleading report that, if someone had taken the trouble to check out before being published, would never have seen the light of day.

Yours faithfully,
SANDY BRUCE-LOCKHART,
Leader, Kent County Council.

Flying visits

Sir,

Your patronisingly dismissive tone aimed at discrediting the UFO phenomenon in general (Square Eyes, 927) unfortunately only emphasises a lack of proper research and your sadly closed viewpoint. There have been a number of well informed books on the subject published recently (not all of them "pre-millennial nonsense") from which it is quite obvious, to any but the most dogged of sceptics, that there is a global cover-up going on. How ironic that PRIVATE EYE, *with its renowned record of unmasking deceit in high places, should be helping to maintain the greatest scandal of all.*

Yours faithfully,
ROGER FEARNSIDE,
London W1.

Downside

Sir,

"Leading Aitken-supporter" Andrew Pierce? I have a close friend of many years' standing, also called Andrew Pierce, a political correspondent at the TIMES, *who rang me in great jubilation to tell me of Jonathan Aitken's downfall so that we could celebrate the news together. Are the two by any chance related? I think we should be told.*

Yours faithfully,
DEBORAH COLLINS,
London E15.

Tips for Tatton

Sir,

Knowing as I do your admiration for Neil and Christine Hamilton, I wonder whether I could make an appeal through you to the readers of the EYE*?*

I am writing a book about the campaign in Tatton to be called PURPLE HOMICIDE: FEAR & LOATHING ON KNUTSFORD HEATH.

If any EYE *readers have any amusing aperçus they may care to write to me at the* OBSERVER *so I can better recount the true glory of the former member for Tatton and his tigress.*

Yours, not entirely taking the piss,
JOHN SWEENEY,
The Observer.

"Hear it? The Dawn Chorus? First the burglar alarms... then the car alarms and police sirens chime in..."

Speke easy

Sir,

It's always interesting to read letters from Manchester about how the entire north of England supports Manchester's second runway and how inaccessible Liverpool (Speke) airport is.

Perhaps the Manchester School of Geography would like to add the A5300 to its lists as its major reason for existing is to connect Liverpool (Speke) to the M62, M57, M58 & M6. By road it's probably quicker to get to Speke from central Manchester than it is to get to Manchester airport itself.

JOHN BRADLEY,
Liverpool.

Street wise

Sir,

Re: the For Sale blurb (EYE *927) for a delightful family home in Islington, it is stated that the present owner's son attends Brompton Oratory.*

Brompton Oratory is a church. The London Oratory is the school where our leader's son gets his education. In Fulham, a few miles away. Refer to your A-Z please.

Yours sincerely,
IAIN MCDOUGALL,
Coatbridge.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Except for his car, he's the only man on the track..."
MURRAY WALKER, ITV
(S. McQuoney)

"Walking down the street, I saw — to be perfectly precise — ten, twenty, fifty, one hundred beggars..."
TOMMY BOYD, Talk Radio
(Roy Asser)

"Bernhard Langer is considered a good putter from this range, irrespective of his reputation."
PETER ALLIS, BBC2
(Harry Davies)

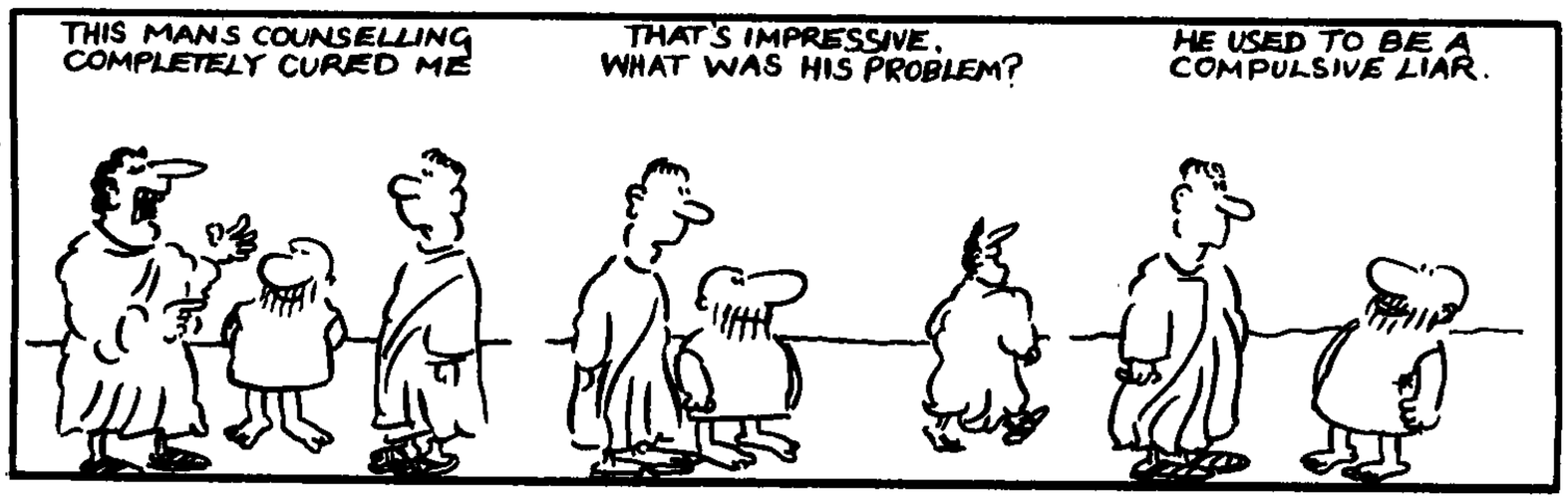
Tony Lewis: *So, it's the 40th anniversary of Test Match Special. How long has it been going?*

Christopher Martin-Jenkins: *Forty years...*

Radio 4
(Bernard Hughes)

"That's a question. When did a country have three losing nations in European competitions?"
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(Geoffrey Corser)

HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

o "Selling dog is the best job I ever had," Nguyen Van Banh told a Hanoi TV news programme. "The dog seller's tools are simple, just a bicycle with baskets, snuff powder, steel chains, leather belts, lemons, and a steel tube to knock out stubborn dogs. Selling four dogs a day can bring me VND100,000. Then I hire two men to do the farming for me in the harvest season."

Nguyen Van Banh is one of a growing number of young people in the Vietnamese countryside who are becoming wealthy by selling dog meat to city dwellers.

"The major markets are Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It's easy to spot the sellers by the loud cries and chorus of barking black and yellow dogs running after their comrades who are trapped in the baskets. The most difficult but most pleasant phase of the work is noosing the dogs. Since it is difficult for a stranger to get close, you have to deceive them by getting down on your hands and knees and barking. Then you hold out your hand and offer them tit-bits, then you stroke them. Then you very quickly lasso them and put them in a basket until it's time to bang them on the head.

"I sell dog at VND5,000 a kilogram, but for people who don't need money, you can exchange them for rice-cookers, mosquito nets, or blankets. I like to slaughter the dog in front of the purchaser, so they can see that it is really fresh. I don't think most dogs understand the futures awaiting them, even after they've seen what happens to their comrades. They're not very bright. Lemon marinade is our best seller. Once stuffed, the flavour seeps into the flesh. Tasty tasty!" *(Vietnam News, 30/1/97. Spotter: D. McNair)*

—o—

o "Correction. In our last week's issue (16 April 1997), in the story entitled 'Kebour Ghenna starts to get tough', we erroneously quoted Ato Kebour as saying 'there is nothing new in hanging secretary generals at the end of his or her term'. We left out the letter 'C' from the word changing for it to come out 'hanging'. Therefore we would like the sentence to be corrected to read 'there is nothing new in changing secretary generals...' We regret the distress this error has caused the family of Ato Kebour. The Editor." *(Entrepreneur [Ethiopia] 23/4/97. Spotter: Ron Symington)*

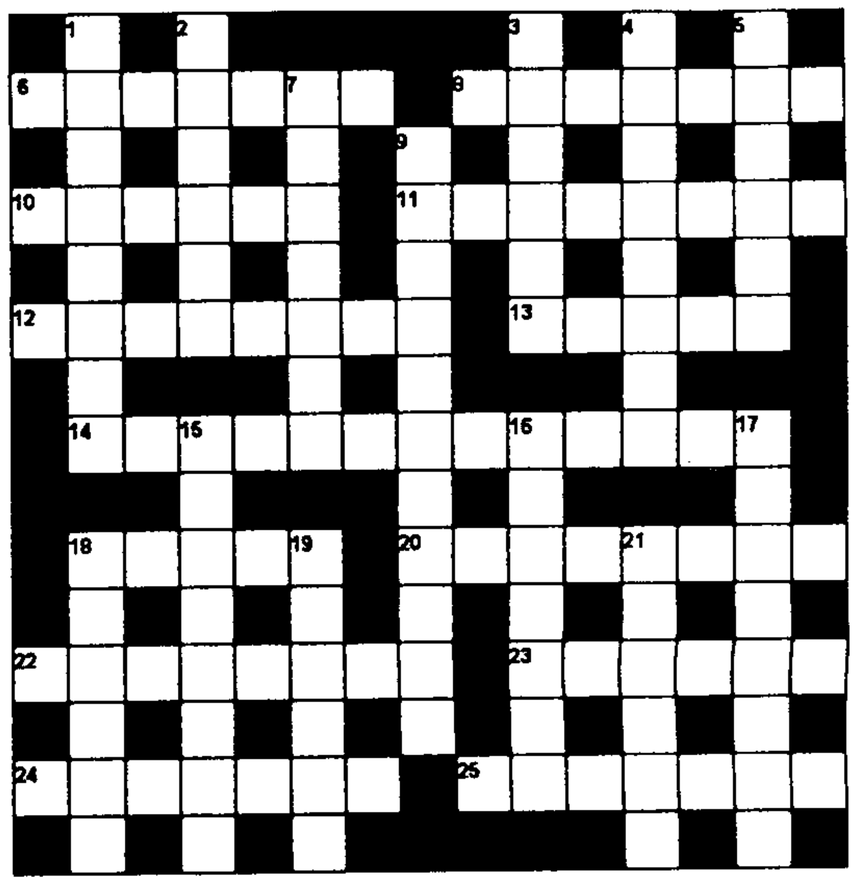
—o—

o *"Why commit suicide because of losing sexual power? Problems of this nature can lead to marriage breakdowns, with one partner unable to satisfy the other and wrongly suspecting the latter of infidelity, so let Dr Matunge cure your impotence today with his healing herbs. Loss of sexual power in males can be caused by the following factors: mumps, scrotal swelling, misery, elephantiasis caused by the culex mosquito, pubic dandruff, scrotal hernia, masturbation, acid in the blood, overindulgence in sex, staying too long without sex, cardiac arrest, or psychological causes such as unexpectedly winning over a 'stubborn' girl. Dr Matunge can be found at his 3 roomed luxury hospital (color television provided) located behind the Gogo Hotel on Bagamoyo Road and Morocco Road in Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam. A star-and-snake-on-baobab-tree signboard shows the direction to the hospital."* (The Guardian [Tanzania] 19/4/97. Spotter: N.R. Jones)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

EYE CROSSWORD 83

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

6 Possibly the *Eye* in short, neutral, got stuck into Maxwell, for example (7)
8 Idealistic university to bump off editor! (7)
10 Bad image constraining good old PM? (6)
11 Lobbyist who apparently greased member (now out), of interest to one erstwhile feminist (3,5)
12 The *Eye*'s so-called mobile toilet is not in office any more (8)
13 An easy catch, this outstanding songbird? (5)
14 One and only Ginger possibly misses being the latest sensation (3,5,5)
18 Universal diet put about by a diabolical contractor (5)
20 Wild party clothes donned by cops getting in with a bad crowd? (4,4)
22 Archer's tally of successes? Cobblers! (8)
23 Tell someone in the event of being gobbled by new Tony (6)
24 Good luck getting an easy lay as a teatime treat? (3,4)
25 House news laid on thick by the *Eye*? (2,5)

DOWN

1 Couch potato needs sex partner and a wrestling match (8)
2 Thieving Ronnie, the board member (6)
3 On a trip, Stephen was so done in (6)
4 Rock: vivacious and witty type (8)
5 Homosexual grabbing sex around English theatre once (6)
7 Definitive sound dose? (3,4)
9 What makes Di over-react? A vital statistic that's increasing? (7,4)
15 Correspondence of luvvies who've united to embrace Pacino (8)
16 Big one — it's good, right, to admit it? (5-2)
17 Mark: mug or public enemy? (8)
18 Describes an outmoded system of university in grip of Iron Lady (mad, youth gone) (6)
19 A top Tory leader right in the mire (1-5)
21 Possibly off trolley, getting access to top grade university? (6)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 18.07.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 82

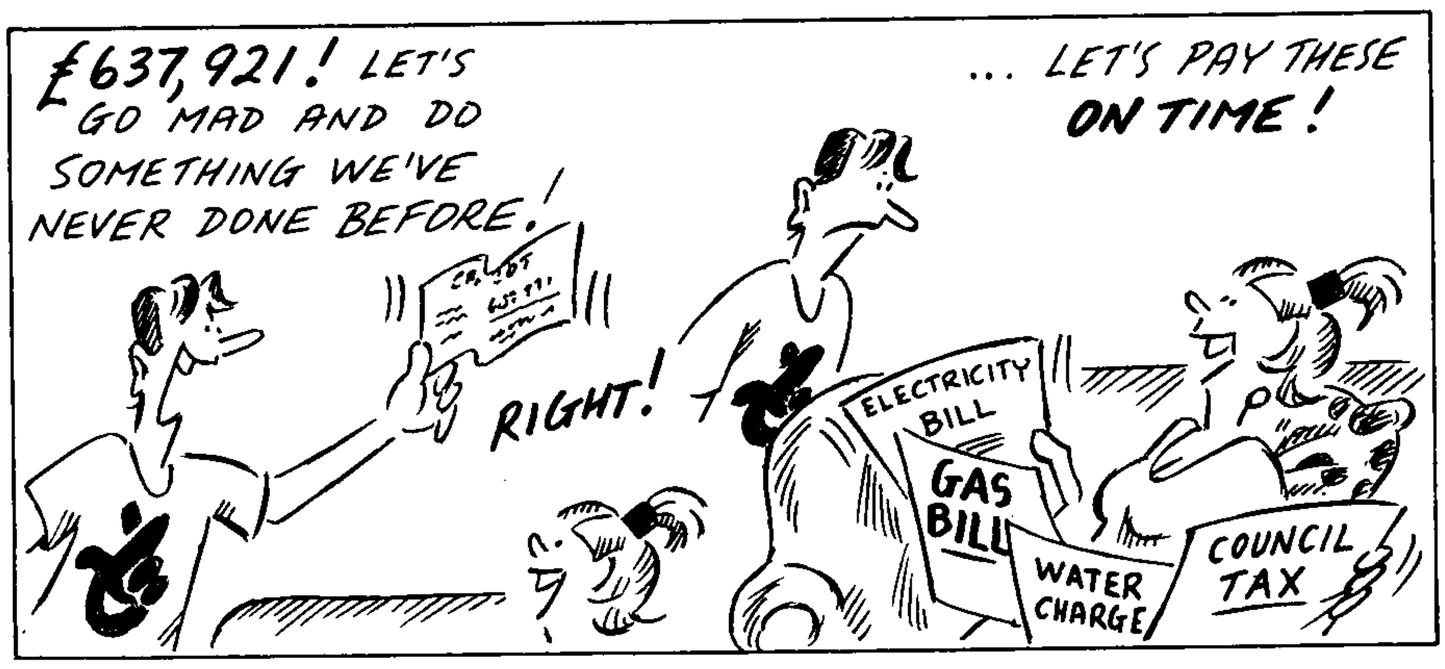
Winner: DAVE NORMAN

ACROSS: 5 Windfall tax 9 Cloister 10 Mossad 11 Unisex 12 Treasury 13 Navy 14 Ponce 15 Foot 16 Blunkett 18 Canada 19 Ogress 20 Swinging 21 Glue-sniffer.

DOWN: 1 Nijinsky 2 Hair 3 All my eye 4 Kansas 6 Detox 7 Glenda Slagg 8 Pair-bonding 12 Tenet 14 Pressmen 15 Fine Gael 17 Needle 18 Cliff 20 Sunk.

The Lottery Winners

TURNER



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

A LETTER FROM THE VICAR

Hullo!

So much for flaming June! They tell us it's been the wettest for 100 years. And I believe them!

I know we all complain about being stuck indoors with the kids! (Cherie and I do!) But for some people, the farmers, the gardeners and the water board it's just what they've been praying for!

And that's the whole point, isn't it? These freaky weather conditions are telling us something very important about our planet.

You know, when I look at my son Euan, I often wonder what sort of a world it is that our generation is handing on to him!

If only all the countries in the world could just get together round a table and agree on just a few simple things that we could all do, to make the world safe for Euan and Euan's children!

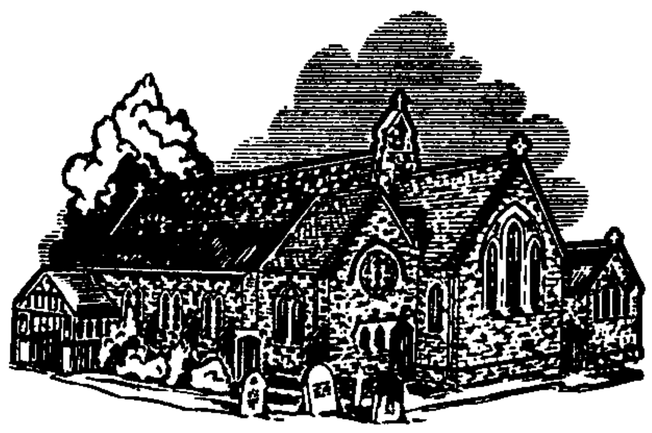
For instance, we could
•stop global warming
•stop cutting down the rainforests
•use our cars a lot less (or, better still, go on bicycles!)
•make sure we don't drop crisp packets in the churchyard. (Mr Mandelson tells me that from now on there will be a £100 fine on any member of the parish suspected of dropping litter on church premises.)

The important thing is that we can all do our bit! It's not someone else's problem, it's your problem!

Enough of the heavy stuff! You've all come up with some terrific ideas about our St Albion's Millennium Experience (SAME) project!

That's certainly given the lie to all those who said we should do nothing to celebrate Our Lord's 2000th birthday!

Honestly! Look, the fact of the matter is that, if people had taken that kind of



negative attitude in the past, we should never have had Stonehenge, Nelson's Column or the Tower of London!

We're jolly lucky to have secured the services of Mr McCormack from the Rotary Club who is going to get local businesses interested in putting up stands inside the tent. Which is pretty exciting! The fact that Mr McCormack is taking a token fee (nothing like the figures I hear bandied about down at the Britannia Arms, by the way!) for putting his considerable know-how at our disposal should be a cause for rejoicing, not moaning!

Remember the story of the man in the Bible, who sent out invitations to a really good party, and nobody came!

They were all sorry afterwards, because they'd missed a really good night out! *(Luke 24, 3-7, I think!).*

Enough of me — now it's your turn!

Tony

LETTER OF THE WEEK (chosen by A. Campbell)

Dear Tony,

What a great idea, to put up the Millennium Marquee on the wasteland next to the cemetery. My suggestion for a really visionary event is to have an "Internet Cafe", so that people can surf the net while eating home-made cakes prepared by the good ladies of the parish. A fusion of old and new!

Enid Mandelson (no relation)

This Week's Thank Yous

* To our Treasurer Mr Brown for his comprehensive review of the Church finances. We were all hugely impressed by his mastery of the figures — even if we don't understand all the details! Particularly good was his suggestion that our pensioners should put more money in the Poor Box. After all, they are the ones who are going to be poor and need help!

(And do we understand that Gordon may well have some other good news for us sometime soon? It is a blessed state, Gordon, as Cherie and I can assure you! T.B.)

Verses By A Local Poet

Based on the famous Chinese Hai-ku

Red sky at night
Tony's a delight.
Red sky in the morning
New era dawning!

Will Hutton, senior prefect
St Albion's Comprehensive

Notices

● **Mrs Mowlam's** scheduled talk on *"A Fresh Start For The Troubled Province"* has been postponed until further notice. She will be replaced by Mrs Harman who has kindly agreed to talk on the theme of *"Blessed are the poor — but not the skivers".*

● **Mr Blunkett,** Chairman of the Governors of St Albion Primary School, will not be mending the leak in the roof until all pupils get full marks in the Table Test. Parents please note.

To Remember In Your Prayers

MR LLEW SMITH, the Welsh parishioner who thought Tony had said something to him that Tony clearly had not. Tony has of course forgiven Llew for his mistake, but knows that Llew will not be expecting to be elected to the PCC in the near future, or indeed ever.

P.M.

For Sale

ONE FAMILY-SIZE BED (complete with mattress). Very good condition. £615,000 or nearest offer. Apply The Vicarage.

❖

T.B. writes: I know there have been a few jokes about our new Dreamticket bed from The World of Beds. Although it may seem a bit extravagant, if you're doing a job like mine (or Cherie's, for that matter!) a good night's sleep is vital if you're going to give 100 percent the next day. After all, doesn't it say in the Good Book "the lion shall lie down with the lamb" — and not be kept awake all night by a lumpy mattress!

Advertisement

Monsieur André's

All ladies welcome at sensible prices (£2,000 and upwards).
For full-cut, styling and tinting.
Also deep root treatment.

At Monsieur André, everyone has a good hair day!

Satisfied customers include the vicar's wife, MRS BLAIR, who had the popular Morticia cut.

Monsieur André

SALONS IN ST ALBION HIGH STREET AND DENVER, COLORADO.

HAMILTON LASHES 'BRITISH JUSTICE'

by Our Parliamentary Staff **Quentin Lettoff**

MR Neil Hamilton, the disgraced former Con-servative MP, was last night fuming at the Downey Report which officially branded him "a liar, a cheat, a cad, a swine and a liar".

Said Hamilton, appearing with his wife on the TV comedy quiz show, *Have You Got Cash For Me?*:

"What sort of justice do you call this? In this country a man is innocent until proven guilty. And then he is still innocent. This is a fundamental principle in English law, enshrined in Magna Carter-Ruck and defended down the centuries by true Englishmen like Robert Maxwell, Ernest Saunders and Sir Darius Guppy."

Thumbs Downey

Mr and Mrs Hamilton will be appearing this Christmas at the Hexagon in Slough in the pantomime *Ali Fayed and the Forty Brown Envelopes.*

SCIENTISTS BAFFLED BY 'HUGE FLAT ROCKS' ON MARS

by Our Science Staff **Adams Mars-Jones**

NASA boffins admitted last night that they were mystified by the mysterious plateau-like formations that seem to litter the otherwise barren surface of Mars.

"What we have here," said one puzzled planet-watcher, "are symmetrical piles of carbon-based matter stacked in rows thousands of miles high and millions of miles wide.

Relaunch Rocket

"It is a truly awesome sight — but, incredible as it may seem, there are discernible signs of lettering on the piles and there are even what look like drawings."

The space telescope on the Mars Rover appears to show a crude image of an alien coming out of a spaceship and asking a sheep to "take me to your leader", with the signature of "Mahood" in the corner.

Scientists are already dubbing these huge formations "unsold copies of Punch magazine" and their sites appear on the maps marked as the Valley of Al-Fayed.

The Unread Planet

But the scientists deny that this discovery proves there is intelligent life on Mars. A man with a beard told reporters:

"The magazine may have existed millions of years ago but it is now clearly dead. It could not survive on Mars, but then it could not survive on Earth".

ON OTHER PAGES:
Colour pictures of girls with no clothes on.

BBC Summer Schedule

The Money Programme (*Sunday*) returns with new presenter John Birt counting up his money.

Great Gravy Train Journeys (*Monday*). John Birt travels the historic route from LWT to the BBC picking up a huge amount of money on the way.

Birts of a Feather (*Wednesday*). Wide-boys John and his friend Christopher live together in their luxury Wood Lane mansion and come up with hilarious new schemes to make even more money.

Crimewatch (*Tuesday*). Tonight a reconstruction of an audacious heist where the Director General of the BBC carries off sacks of licence payers' loot in broad daylight — assisted by "an insider" known only as Sir Christopher Bland. Can you help?

Antiques Roadshow (*Thursday*). An apparently worthless man in a suit and glasses with a silly grin is suddenly valued at £400,000. "I would never have believed it," says proud owner Sir Christopher Blank-Cheque.

National Lottery (*Saturday*). Who will this week's lucky winner be? Will it be Christopher or will it be John again? It certainly won't be you. *(That's enough programmes. Ed.)*

Is there intelligent life on Ulster?

Our Science Staff investigates

THE "Orange Planet", as it is called, has long been assumed to be a barren wasteland incapable of supporting any civilisation, but earlier this year there were a few optimistic signs of sentient life forms on the planet.

However, when the new probe, the Mo Mowlam, was finally released onto the surface, there was nothing to be seen except huge explosions going off on all sides, with clouds of gas and smoke rising into the hostile atmosphere.

The data initially coming from the Mowlam indicated "little orange men" moving along in formation with curiously shaped black heads and then "little green men" appearing and throwing projectiles at them.

Scientists, however, were unimpressed. "We have seen this sort of thing before on Ulster. It has been going on for millions of years and it means nothing. There is no reason for anyone to raise their hopes about the future of the planet." *(Surely 'province'? Ed.)*

SHOULD ANN WIDDECOMBE MARRY?

Charles Windsor writes

"ER... Well, you... just because she is an older woman and not very attractive... er... that doesn't mean that you know there is any constitutional reason why she shouldn't you know... as my old friend Sir Laurens van der Post used to say, 'As time goes by/The fundamental things apply/di dum di dum di dum'... and it's awfully true, isn't it?... Just because Ms Widdecombe has blotted her copybook, you know, been an MP and everything... that's not to say she shouldn't use her position as an unmarried single non-mother to lecture everyone about whatever she wants... er... it is a tricky one, isn't it?"

© Prince Charles.

"Well, that's enough about me – my husband will now explain the laws of offside to you..."

HONG KONG SPECIAL

Exclusive To All Papers

PATTEN WEEPS AS LAST POST SOUNDS AS HEAVENS OPEN AS BRITANNIA SAILS AS FLAG IS LOWERED AS EMPIRE COMES TO END — AND I WAS THERE!

by **Lunchtime O'Boo-Hoo-Hoos**

IT WAS as though the heavens themselves were weeping as the band of the Royal Scots Hussars played "Abide With Me" for the last time in a monsoon-like downpour.

High on the peak of Mount Victoria a lone bagpiper sounded the Last Post while the biggest firework display the world has ever seen lit up the famous skyscraper-lined harbour of the phenomenon known simply as Hong Kong.

At exactly midnight the curtain came down on 147 years of history... opium wars... Prince Charles... junks sailing serenely... tower blocks... end of Empire... sense of foreboding... heads held high... Prince Charles... map of world marked red... Britannia sinks below waves... last Imperial pageant... fleetsh lit up... Tim Henman through to fourth round... is this enough?

© *All newspapers.*

THE PATTEN GIRLS

Posh Patten **Sexy Patten** **Baby Patten**

END OF ERA AS HACKS ROLL IN

by Our Freebie Staff **Dominic Largeone, Charles Mooreplease, Alan Freebisher, Max Hasdrinks and Simon Junket**

THE WORLD watched in dismay as thousands of hacks rolled over the border into Hong Kong to mark the handover of huge amounts of drink to the biggest army of reporters ever seen.

The citizens of Hong Kong stood open-mouthed in shock as wave after wave of hacks swept through the town, occupying all the bars and hotels in a matter of minutes.

"You would have thought they would have shown more restraint," said one terrified local cab driver, Mr Rickshaw Littlejohn.

"It's an invasion, that's what it is. Once they've had a few drinks they'll be round there interrogating me and asking me about the future.

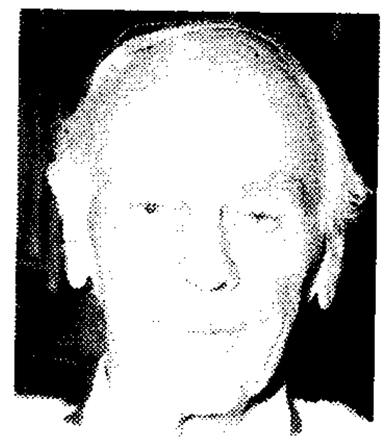
"I had that Chris Patten's dog in the back of the cab once — very tasty it was too."

Everywhere it was the same story — the chilling sound of corks popping, and hacks barking orders at the cowed locals, such as "Trebles all round, matey — it's OK, it's all on Conrad."

There was no escape. Everywhere you looked there were men clutching mobile phones and shouting "Hold the front page! It's the Editor here — I've got a great scoop on what a brilliant party I've just been to."

And as the drinks were lowered *(continued page 94)*

Bill Deedes Writes



When I first came to Hong Kong for the old Morning Post in 1895, things were pretty different, I can tell you. I was only a young man of 60, just starting on life as a cub reporter... continued age 94.

That Hong Kong Farewell Banquet Menu in full

Chinese Takeaway Whole Island

Letters to the Editor

The Hong Kong Handover

SIR — I am sure all your readers were as shocked as I was by the pitiful behaviour of the self-styled "Governor of Hong Kong", Mr "Chris" Patten, during the handing over of our last remaining colony to the Communists.

Day after day we saw him on television blubbering and snivelling like some homesick schoolboy on the first day of term.

Whatever became of the stiff upper lip that was for so long the hallmark of the Englishman? No wonder the Chinese were jubilant as they goose-stepped down Kowloon High Street. No wonder they were openly contemptuous of the whimpering Patten as he cravenly pulled down the flag and handed over "The Jewel in the Crown" (which, I am delighted to say, is being reshown on Sunday evenings, with the delectable Miss Geraldine James playing the part previously played by herself. But I digress).

As one who has been out east and knows the wily ways of the Chinee, I can safely say that nothing could have been better calculated to convince the people of Hong Kong of the sad moral decline of our once-great nation than the spectacle of Mr Patten's pathetic lack of self-control as he sobbed helplessly into his suit. It was indeed hard to believe that this hapless cry-baby and bed-wetter was really a Governor in the same mould as, say, my late great-uncle, Sir Reginald Massingberd-Gussett, VC and Bar, who for 50 years served as Governor of the Gilbert and Sullivan Islands and handed them back to their inhabitants without a flicker of emotion as, clad only in his ostrich feathers, he rode his bicycle into the pitiless breakers of the Pacific Ocean and was lost forever. The very thought of it brings tears to my eyes. I must break off now to have a good manly weep.

SIR H. GUSSETT
Dunrulin, Jardine St Mathieson, Kowlooni, Nr Henley

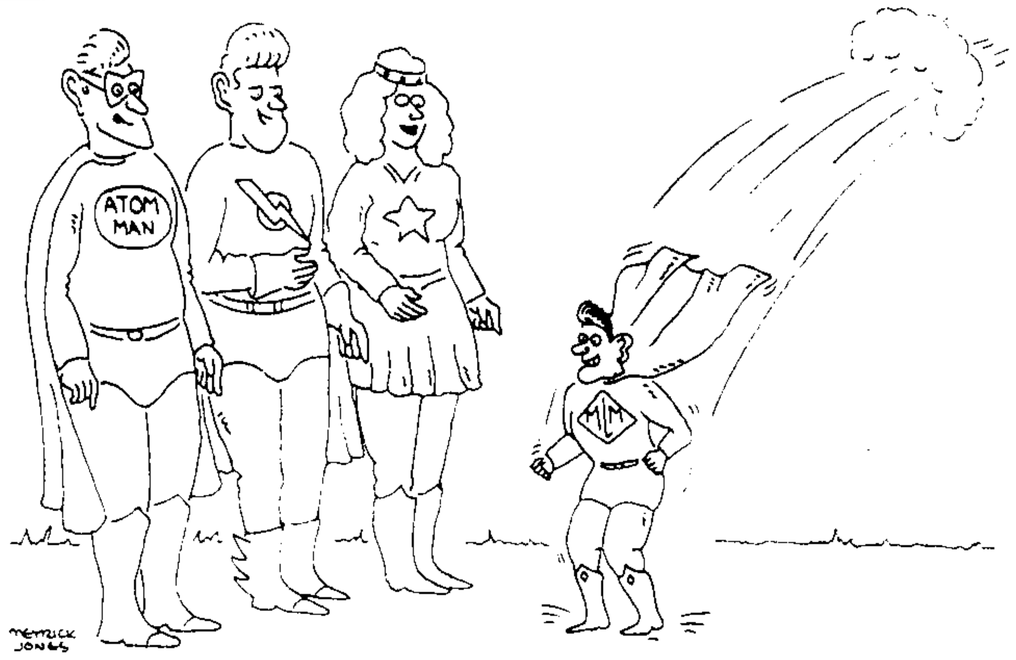
Trial By Media

SIR — As one who has known Mr Iscariot for many years, may I say how I utterly deplore the recent pillorying he has received at the hands of certain sections of the media, who have both engineered and then gloated shamelessly over his downfall. Here was a young man of enormous ability and great personal charm, destined for the highest offices in the land, whose only real crime was to be well-born, handsome and rich. It was this that excited the envy of loathsome journalists, who hunted him down with all the pitiless savagery of a pack of hounds tearing to pieces some noble stag in the foothills of Ben Hebron.

If Mr Iscariot did receive the thirty pieces of silver alleged by the gutter press, then I have no doubt that there is a perfectly innocent explanation. It may well be that Mr Iscariot's wife was meant to pick up the money and take it to Switzerland, to donate it to a charity of her choice. Alternatively, those of us familiar with the workings of the security services know that it is often necessary to stay in the Paris Ritz, at the expense of some dodgy Arab, for the good of one's country.

Alternatively, I am completely off my head, which is the most likely explanation.

SAUL JOHNSON
c/o The Spectator



"It's Marvellous Little Man! He helps us in the garden and does a bit of decorating indoors if it's wet"

FROM THE HOUSE OF GNOME

Beautiful Commemorative Mug Offer
To Mark The Historic Wedding In The Crypt
of the House of Commons of the
Rt Hon William Squitt,
the Leader of the Conservative Party
and his lovely Welsh bride-to-be
Miss Ffioncée Jenkins

THIS unique hand-made-style bone china drinking mug has been commissioned by the House of Gnome from the universally-acclaimed ceramic portraitist Sir Ralph Stodswell in a limited edition of only 6 million.

Each mug will be personally signed in facsimile by the bride and groom in the wedding of the century.

This unique souvenir of the most important event in our island history is a work of art which in generations to come will be ranked alongside the Wilton Diptych, Nicholas Hilliard's miniature of the Earl of Essex and the famed Book of Kells.

To secure your own personal stake in Britain's proud heritage, just send £412.99 (plus VAT) to:

Hague Smug Offer, Unit 4, Yeovil Trading Estate, Ashdown, Dorset. (Credit cards welcome)

*Mugs made in People's Republic of China

Guarantee

We cannot guarantee the following:

1. That the portraits will bear any resemblance to Mr Squitt or his lady wife.
2. That the mugs are not made by children below the age of 12 in conditions of near slavery.
3. That your mug will ever reach you.

CAMBRIDGE 'WOMAN DON' WAS MAN SHOCK

by Our Academic Staff **Henry Porterhouse-Bluestocking**

THE WORLD of scholarship was rocked to its foundations yesterday when it was revealed that a prominent woman lecturer at an all-female college was in fact a man.

Dr "Germaine" Greer, an English professor, had attracted suspicion for some time by her overtly masculine behaviour.

Said a shocked colleague, Dr Hilary Term: "Some of us were worried by Dr Greer's behaviour, which did not seem at all in keeping with that expected of a female don.

Don't Be Beastly To The Germaines

"She was aggressive and foul-mouthed, peppering her lectures with four-letter words and obscenities, and boasting of her sexual exploits.

"She behaved to other women like a typical male chauvinist, commenting on their appearance in a derogatory and sexist manner."

One woman who fell foul of Dr Greer's contempt for her supposed sex was a female journalist, savaged for her "bird's nest hair", "fat cleavage" and "fuck me shoes".

Silly Punt

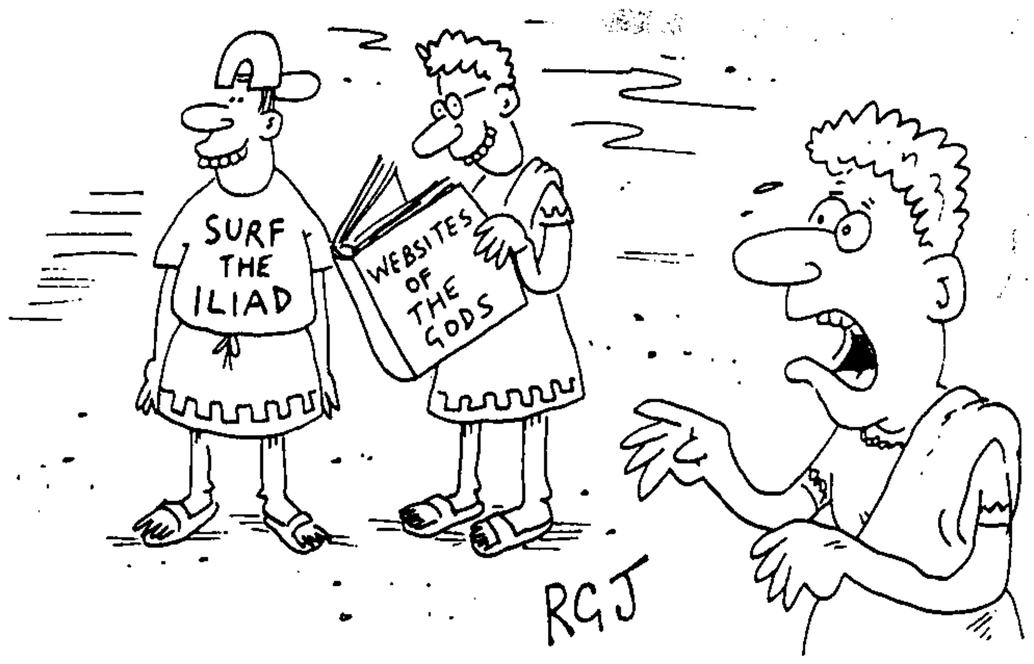
But the college authorities have now learned that Dr Greer's real name is Clive James, an Australian who came to England in the 1960s to pursue an academic career.

After undergoing a sex-change operation in the 1970s, Mr James transformed himself into Dame Edna Everage, the so-called "female eunuch".

Prof. Rolfina Harris is 97.

The row stoked the mood of recrimination among Scots Tories, with Mr Beat fingering Mr Bell for the rumours of gay liaisons which led to the resignation of Sir Michael Hirst on the eve of the election.

Independent



"Oh no! Ancient Geeks!"

Foreign News

OUTRAGE OVER RACIST ARTICLE

by Our Spectator Staff
Frank Lee Hopeless

THE GREEK community in London are seething with anger following an outspoken attack on a respected Greek figure working at the prestigious *Spectator* magazine.

Mr Taki Takalotofcokeupthenos was described in a Puerto Rican journal (*Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricanmen*) as a "lazy, swarthy, coke sniffing, drunken layabout whose only interest in life is to suck up to wealthy fascists and drool over young aristocratic women in seedy nightclubs".

The article concludes offensively, "Why doesn't this oily Greek jailbird go back to Athens and do his third-rate Stavros act where people might appreciate it?".

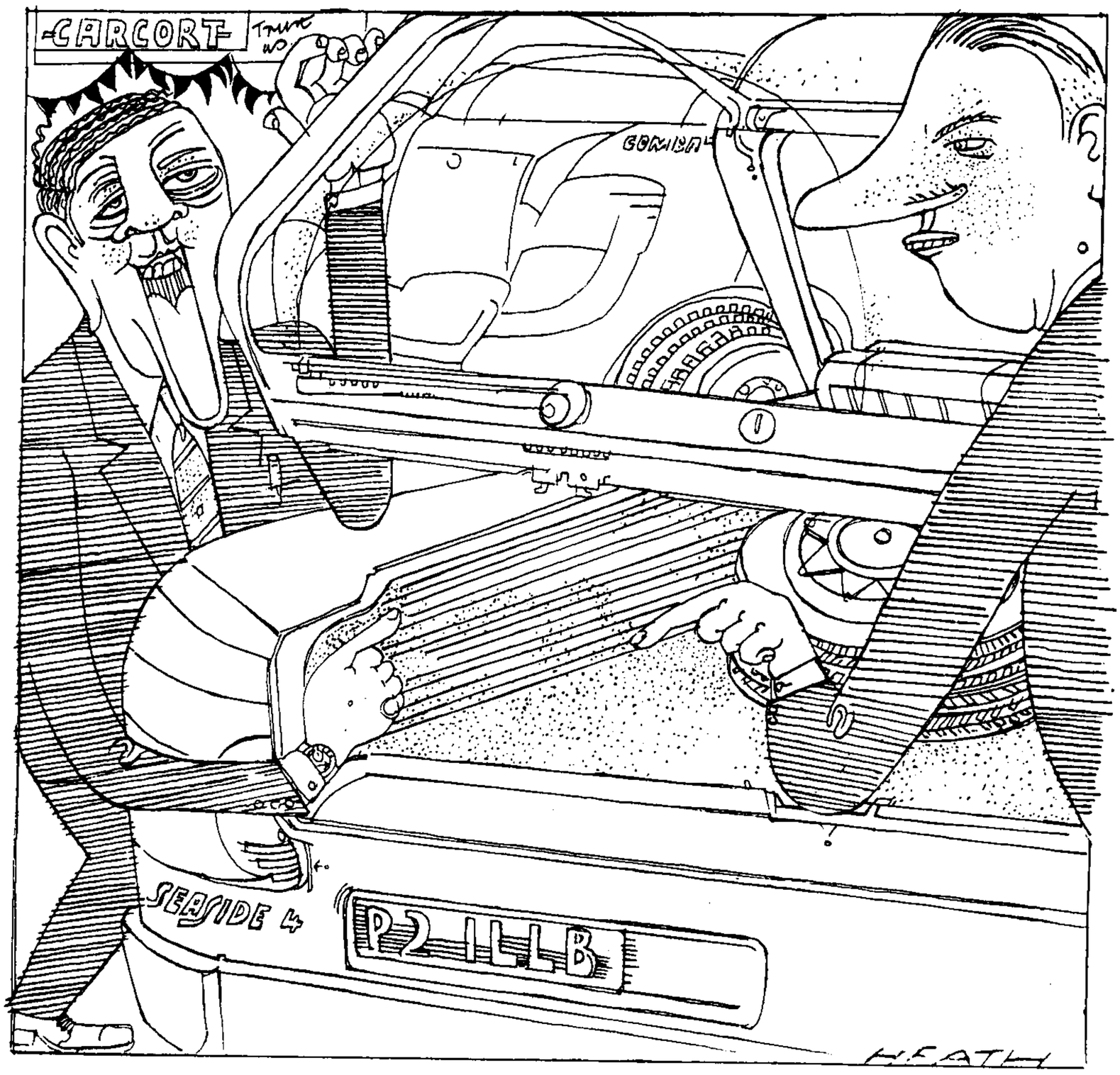
The Spic-tator

Last night Paul Johnson, a friend of Mr Taki's, said he had never read such a disgraceful racist attack except in Mr Taki's column the week before.

Conrad Black Bastard is 92.

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath** **16. Per-wobbably**

"This is highly per-wobbably the mostest good value Motor in our current Wange Sir, it's the Speciaw Edition 'Seaside' to celeber-wate the comin' of the clement wevver, as you can see it's endowed up wiv special 'Seaside' ger-appics on the de-wiver's door — uvver than that it's basically the GLX model which should well suit you up Sir, what wiv you lookin' like an Execcertive style of Gentaw-maan unlike some of the shitbags we get in 'ere — It's got a full set of alloy weews split fow-din' rear seats, 'igh quality stewweo twin airbags in case the wipe's der-wivin' NGAH! HAR!! ABS Ber-wakes in case the wipe's der-wivin' NGAH! HAR!! a comlimenter-wy car-pone in case the wipe ber-wakes darn so she don't get WAPED! 'cos you nebber know these days Sir wop wiv all the shitbags awound — my wipe don't need a car-pone 'cos there ain't no chance of 'er bein' waped she's a wight two & eight NGAH! HAR!! we like a larp don't we Sir? All for a very weesanoble eleven fowsand on the woad we can awwange foinance for you Sir Oh yes it's deppinatley your style of quality motor Wozzat Sir? You wanna littaw time to fink about it do you? rightho Sir — go on fuck off then!!"



Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE

Newz

BLAIRZONE are back from their world tour and they have gone straight back into the studio to work on their latest project.

Says lead singer Tony Blair: "It's the gig to end all gigs. We're playing Greenwich, it's called Millennium, and the set alone is gonna cost £600 million. Crazy or what?

We're gonna get all our mates in to create the biggest happening since Cream played Crystal Palace in 1975 or Genesis (Gabriel era) filled the Milton Keynes Bowl with 'Selling England by the Pound', supported by Gryphon in 1973!

Ambitious? Too right! Loud? 'spect so! A waste of money? Rock and *Roll!"*

Whoze Rockin' at The Millennium Super-Gig

- *Mark and the McCormaks*
- *Fleetwood Cameron Mackintosh*
- *The Grade-ful Dead*
- *The Smith (Chris)*

With special guest support from the Teletubbies.

Tony's Classic Trax

- ***Earth, Windfall and Fire (Greatest Hits)***
- ***The Court of the Not-Quite-So-Crimson King by King Not-Quite-So-Crimson.***
- ***China Crisis (Farewell Album)***
- ***Anything by the New Seekers, who are much better than the Old Seekers who got very lost in the '70s and had to change completely to survive. "I'd like to teach the world to use computers" remains a classic.***

Tony's Global Warning

"Da-doo-doo-doo, da-dah-dah-dah, is all I have to say to you". The late great Sting spoke for all of us.

Gordy Fax

Moody axeman GORDON "GORDY" BROWN is a breadhead — it's official. Gordy has a reputation for not buying his round and refusing to fork out for a DJ at swanky dos. Now the macho money maniac has come up with a plan to cut corporation tax by 2 percentage points to 31% thereby making it the lowest ever in the UK. Says Gordy, "Radical or what?!"

RUPERT EVERETT'S SHOCK REVELATION STUNS WORLD

by Our Showbiz Staff
Phillipa Column

RUPERT EVERETT, the well-known homosexual and gigolo, last night amazed the world with the confession that he was also "an actor".

"It's not something I'm very proud of," he told reporters. "I did it because I needed the money. This man just came up to me outside a toilet and propositioned me. One thing led to another and the next thing I knew I was in a load of really terrible films."

The news came as a shock to members of the showbiz community. "I can't believe he was ever an actor," said one distressed thespian. "It was certainly a well-kept secret. Nothing in Rupert's behaviour ever suggested that he could or would act."

Rupert Everett is desperate for publicity.

"Hello... This is the Police. If you are being attacked from behind by a mad axe-murderer, press 'One'..."

TYSON FOR NEASDEN SENSATION

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Stands With a Rain-Soaked Egg 'n' Cress Sandwich A Glass Of Tesco Special 'Wimbledon' Wine And A Bill For Thirty Quid

THE soccer world was rocked to its foundations last night when it was announced that Neasden's legendary supremo Ron Knee, 57, had made a dramatic offer to the disgraced former World Heavyweight Champion Mike Tyson to captain the famous North Circular club.

Knee has made no secret of his frustration in attempting to sign a replacement for Neasden's erstwhile captain, the volatile and enigmatic Frenchman Eddie Depardieu, who left the club in high dudgeon at the end of last season. But, in Tyson, the ashen-faced mastermind believes he has the right man for the job.

Ear We Go

Knee told reporters: "Mike is a minster, a savage, a nutcase. He is our man. I saw him get stuck into Holyfield's ear and I said to myself 'Ron, this is the man you have been looking for'."

Punch Drunk

Avoiding questions on how the cash-strapped club would finance such a deal, Knee continued: "Mad Mike's determination to inflict maximum physical damage on the opposition will be an inspiration to the squad — or what remains of it as a result of the mass walkouts following relegation."

When it was pointed out that Tyson is a boxer rather than a professional footballer, Knee was quick to respond. "He will not be alone," the tight-lipped supremo said. "Few, if any, of my players are footballers in the full sense of the word. Indeed, of the three who have not left to join other clubs, only Wally Foot, the one-legged net minder, knows how to kick a ball — an activity which is, alas, denied him on account of being deficient in a limb vital to that particular skill."

Chewing It Over

However, Neasden fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) showed delight at the prospect of a certifiable psychopath pulling on the famous number seven shirt. "Tyson is perfect for Neasden," said Sid. "And if he invites Doris into his hotel bedroom for a midnight tipple and suggests she makes herself more comfortable by getting off her kit, I shall not stand in his way."

Ron Knee is 57.

LATE SCORE

Hong Kong Handover Charity Vase

AFC Neasden 0

Chinese Army 40,000

(Nanki-Poo 20,000, Ko-Ko 19,999, Pevsner 1 [o.g.])

Wimbledon '97

PUNMANIA SWEEPS BRITAIN

by Our Tennis Staff **Phil Space**

YES! It's Wimbledon 1997 and the whole nation's gone PUN-CRAZY as British Punsters prove that they are the best in the world!

First-class English puns are once again making us proud. Puns such as: "Tim Gentleman Please!", "The Henman Cometh!", "Hendoubtedly the Greatest!", "Wimbledon Champi-Hen", "Tim Nice But Win", "Hen's Eggs-actly Perfect" and "Sampras Wins Wimbledon Again" *(surely 'Timbledon's Coming Hen!'? Ed.)*.

For years Britain's puns have been languishing in the outside pages, but now they have battled through every section and are now triumphantly on the centre of the front page.

International news hasn't a chance! No more German, French, American and Chinese stories! From now on Britain is Number Pun for desperate tennis-based humour!

ON OTHER PAGES:

Brown serves ace budget . . 3
Patten crashes out 4
Is Aitken the top seedy? . . . 5
Hague volleys Blair at Question Time 6
New Balls Camilla! 7

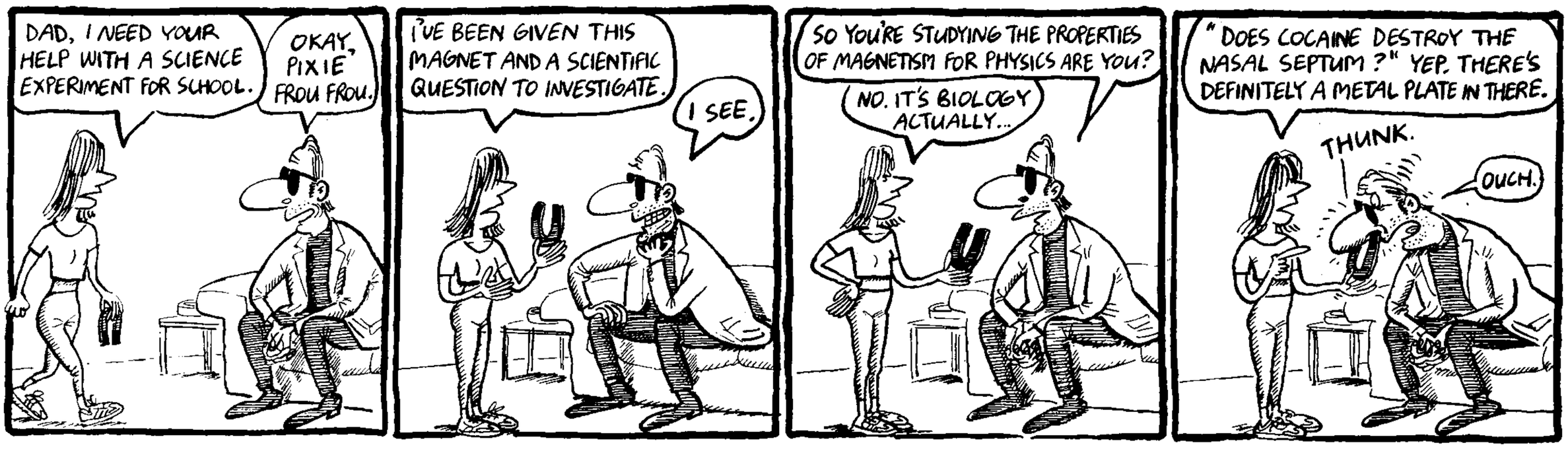
(That's enough, Ed.)

Remember there's more Fun in the Pun!

OLD PALACE SCHOOL OF JOHN WHITGIFT
(Croydon)
Independent Day School for Girls
Required for September 1997
A well-qualified graduate to teach
Georgraphy
Croydon Advertiser

Celeb

LIGGER


DAD, I NEED YOUR HELP WITH A SCIENCE EXPERIMENT FOR SCHOOL.
OKAY, PIXIE FROU FROU.
I'VE BEEN GIVEN THIS MAGNET AND A SCIENTIFIC QUESTION TO INVESTIGATE.
I SEE.
SO YOU'RE STUDYING THE PROPERTIES OF MAGNETISM FOR PHYSICS ARE YOU?
NO. IT'S BIOLOGY ACTUALLY...
"DOES COCAINE DESTROY THE NASAL SEPTUM?" YEP. THERE'S DEFINITELY A METAL PLATE IN THERE.
THUNK.
OUCH.

Exclusive to All Newspapers

YES, IT'S SAINT GORDO THE GREAT

by Our Budget Staff **Alastair Campbell**

MAKE no mistake, Britain's new Chan-cellor is Cromwell, Nelson Rockefeller, Bismarck and Tim Henman all rolled into one!

Yesterday, the House of Commons roared its approval as Gordon Brown pulled off the most astonishing feat of financial wizardry since King Midas turned his cornflakes into gold.

No wonder Gordo the Magnificent was hailed by the City of London as the greatest Chancellor since Tim Henman *(shurely 'Stafford Cripps'? Ed)*.

Last night old age pensioners danced openly in the streets as single mothers cracked open bottles of champagne and surfed the Internet looking for live-in lovers.

The long-term unemployed wept with unashamed gratitude at the news that, as from tomorrow, they would be Britain's new middle class.

Only the fattest of fat cats could complain, cringeing and cowering in their boardrooms.

But for the rest of the nation Gordomania ruled supreme.

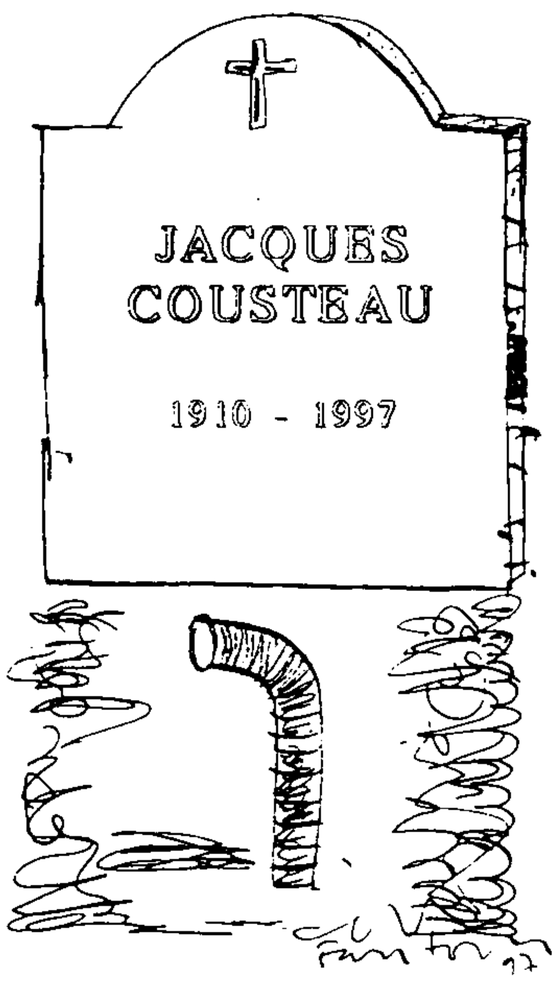
The cry of "God bless Gordon Brown!" rang out from John O'Groats to Land's End, as with one stroke this saintly genius had eradicated poverty, cured the sick and discovered the secret of eternal life *(surely 'prosperity'?)*.

THOSE BUDGET DETAILS IN FULL

- *Up* **Gordon Brown's popularity.**
- *Up* **New Labour's poll rating.**
- *Down* **with the Tories.**
- *Off* **goes Kenneth Clarke to the job centre.**

TV'S PETER JAY WRITES

The effect of the cut in Miras to 10 per cent, coupled with the claw-back on advance corporation tax, must inevitably bring deflationary pressure to bear on an economy showing preliminary signs of overheating, which could well provide a salutary corrective to the negative effect of an over-valued pound at a time when booming consumer demand has shown signs of *(whole country switches over to watch Wimbledon)*.



POETRY CORNER

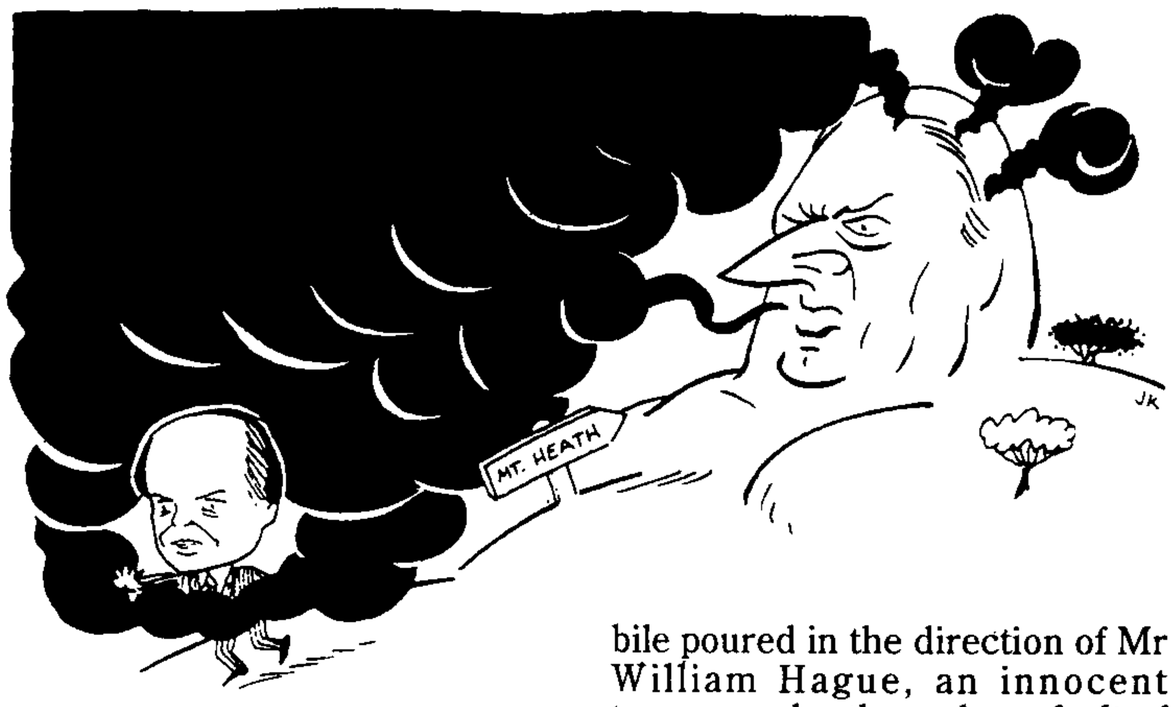
In Memoriam Jacques Cousteau

So. Farewell
Then Inspector
Clousteau.

Star of
The Pink Panther
Films.

Keith is
Not sure I
Have got this
Right.

E. Jacques Thribbeau
(17½ feet underwater)



FAT OLD VOLCANO BLOWS TOP

by Our Man In The West Indies
Ferdinand Mountserrat

AN elderly volcano, long thought to be extinct, yesterday erupted, spewing out huge clouds of poisonous gas.

A continuous stream of black bile poured in the direction of Mr William Hague, an innocent teenager who through no fault of his own had become leader of the Conservative Party.

The dreaded Mount Heath, which has spluttered intermittently for years, finally exploded when the internal pressure of seeing someone else become leader of the party became too great to bear.

Lava-Tory

Although badly shaken by the tide of filth which had engulfed him, staining his blazer and shorts, the diminutive Mr Squitt promised to be back at school in time for his exams *(surely 'wedding'? Ed.)*.

Mount Grocer is 278.

Budget '97

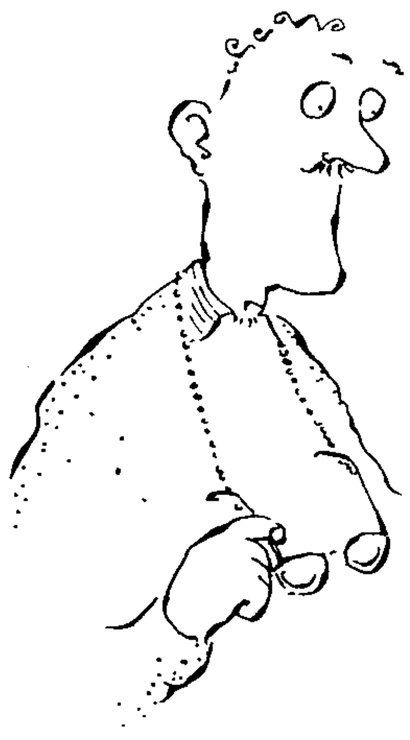
An Eye Guide to how Gordo's Barnstormer will affect the typical British family

● Father of three, about to be divorced, has just lost his job as arms salesman and part-time Conservative MP.
£2 million worse off.

● Single mother, two children at public school, unemployed, and has recently had to sell all her clothes.
£2 million better off.

● Very young single man, no children, about to get married to glamorous blonde, with new job as Tory leader and no prospects.
No change.

● Married man, with working wife and three children, living in rent-free Downing Street, having just sold former house for £600,000.
Better off all-round and should be able to stay in new house forever.



DIARY

LADY THATCHER'S HONG KONG DIARY

To dinner with Governor Patten. He has been my Governor in Hong Kong for a good many years now, following his outstanding success in introducing our Community Charge to a grateful British people.

"If you'll just let me finish," I said to his wife, Mrs Patten, when she offered me a canapé before the meal. "It's never advisable to wear your hair like that. Your type of hair is much better short. Otherwise it gets in the eyes, and one can't have that."

After another glass of Scotch, I set about solving the poor woman's curtain problem.

"You don't want them overflowing at the bottom, dear," I was good enough to advise her. "That way, they gather dust. You want them cut off an inch to an inch-and-a-half above the floor. That way, the dust drops to the ground — and your dust problem is solved!!"

I dipped into my handbag for my trusty pair of kitchen scissors. I never go anywhere without them, not since 1983, when I asked Francis Pym to leave my Cabinet and the poor man proved difficult.

"If one wants a job done well, one must do it oneself," I sighed. I then got down on my hands and knees and set about trimming those curtains to the proper size.

"Margaret, why not join us for dinner now?" It was my Governor, barracking me — ME! — to take my seat. It surprised me, the way forty grown men could sit around a table, eating and drinking, when there was work to be done. My goodness! That's not my way, never has been, never will be!

"If you'll just let me go on!" I said, snipping with vigour in search of real results.

"We just didn't want your dinner to get cold," he interrupted.

"One moment, please! We have a job to do! If you'll just let me finish!"

After another glass of Scotch, we had completed our task, the excess material lay vanquished, and the dust-trap was no more. Rejoice!

Needless to say, the grandees continued making small talk, chewing and swallowing. That's never been my way. Did we really want to leave Hong Kong with dust on the curtains? What sort of legacy is that? Let no one ever accuse me of neglecting the details. It's not in my nature.

After another glass of Scotch, I made my way to the table, sat down on my cushioned chair, and informed the assembled company of their timetable for tomorrow.

"Margaret!" My Governor interrupted me with another hiss. "That's no cushion — that's Mr Ling, Chairman of the Allied and Corporate Bank of East Asia!"

Supported by his advice, I moved to a more dominant position. Mr Ling, who was only small, looked in no fit state to sit around anyone's table, let alone my Governor's. After another glass of Scotch, I laid aside special time to tell everyone how to tie their shoelaces correctly, with the minimum of wastage.

Breakfast the next morning with my new Leader of the Opposition.

"William Hague! William Hague!" I told him. "Have you got that? Have you? William Hague! William Hague! Remember that name! William Hague!"

"Yes, that's my name. My name is William Hague," he chipped in, cockily.

"If you'll let me continue! Do have the good manners to let me go on!" I said, reasonably. "I am talking about the young man I have appointed to lead the Conservative Party. Young. Bald. Northern. I forget his name."

"William Hague!" he interrupted.

"That's it! William Hague! William Hague! Have you got it? Have you? Remember that name! William Hague!"

After another glass of Scotch, I was good enough to give him some tips on how to lead the party for me. "We must tackle it vigorously so that not a shred remains! Freedom under the rule of law! Ministers decide! Frit! Frit! Fritz? Where? Schmidt? Dreadful man! German! Not good! Remember the Good Samaritan! Remember that name! Treachery with a smile on its face! The Lady's not for turning! Rejoice! Rejoice! Have you got that? Have you? Have you?"

The young man nodded. "That's excellent advice, Lady Thatcher," he said. "Thank you most kindly."

"If you'll just let me finish!" I sighed. Why do people insist on interrupting one so? But we women are used to it. After another glass of Scotch, I dipped into my bag, took out my scissors and set to work thinning out his lapels. The British people will never trust a man with wide lapels, and certainly not young whatsisname.

In the afternoon, I generously agreed to my proposal to perform an historic walkabout. This gave the ordinary, decent people of Hong Kong the chance to congratulate me on the way I have stood up to the Chinese these past twenty years by:

a) sticking up for the absolute right of the people of Hong Kong to self-government by Peking; and

b) granting a copper-bottomed guarantee that we will ensure the basic human freedom of the ordinary, decent people of Hong Kong to remain in Hong Kong under Chinese rule, like it or not.

After another glass of Scotch, I launched myself into the bustling streets, full of cornershops and customers. Those doughty folk leapt into doorways at my approach, obviously determined to grant a figure of my world stature a clear path through their streets.

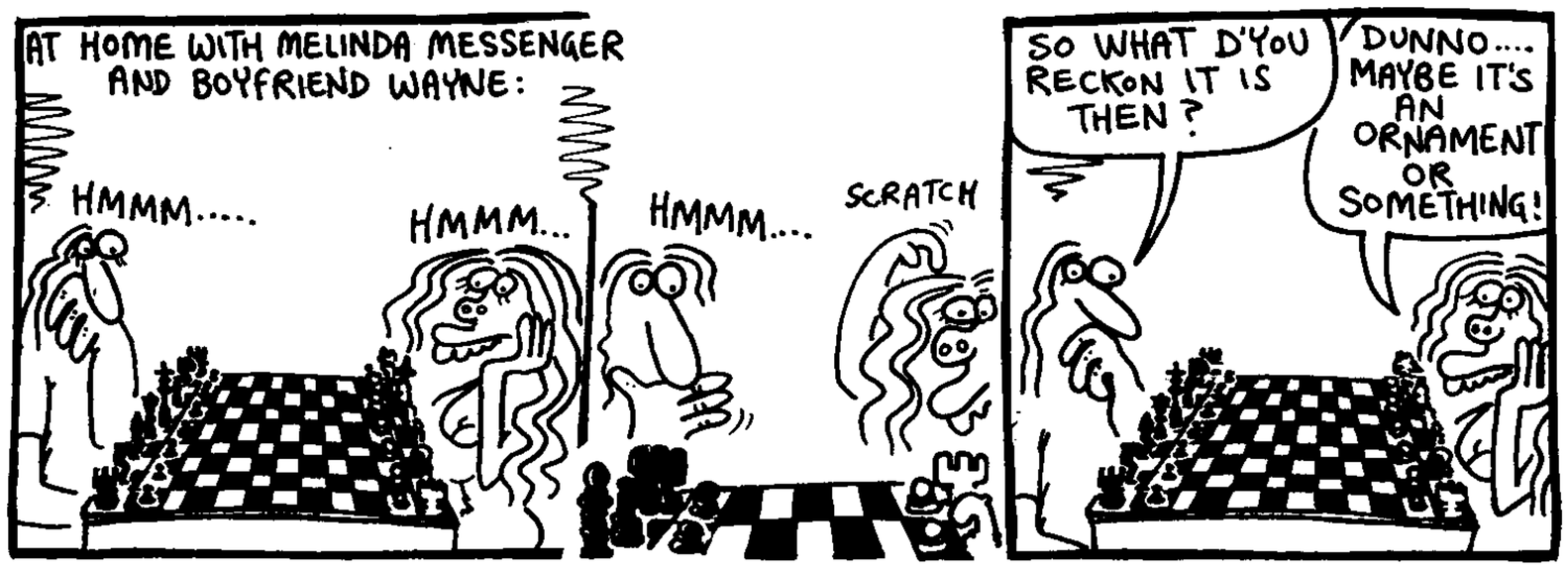
After another glass of Scotch, I darted into a Chinese restaurant. Like any ordinary housewife, I headed for the kitchen. A little man was boiling noodles.

"You don't want to do it like that!" I told him. "You want to fry noodles first, then boil! And no one eats noodles anymore — the future lies in the poached egg! Excuse me! If you'll just let me finish!"

But he refused to listen to sound British commonsense. After a quick glass of Scotch, I dipped into my handbag and got out my scissors. His neck-scarf was a positive dust-trap. A woman's work is never done.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



PISCES
(Feb 20 — Mar 20)
This is a good time to buy items of equipment, especially anything that helps you get around more efficiently or that helps you to keep in touch with others. Look at your telephone bill and see if there is anything you can do to reduce it. Call my line today.
Astroline: 0660 240 450
Astroline calls now cost 50p a minute at all times
Leicester Mercury

Literary Review

History for Boys

THE gay novel has been around for centuries, of course, but the dramatic entry of gay writing into the UK commercial mainstream really came in the late 1980s. It was then, for example, that Faber & Faber discovered that considerable amounts of money could be made from titivating a 60-year-old Stephen Spender manuscript and adorning its jacket with a likely-looking lad dressed only in a pair of bathing trunks.

The Temple (1988) went through eight printings, to be followed into the gay pantheon by Alan Hollinghurst's equally successful *The Swimming Pool Library* and the first rivulets in the tide of Edmund White and Adam Mars-Bar inspired AIDs fiction.

And after gay fiction, inevitably, came gay history. A century or thereabouts after *La Morte d'Oscar*, thirty years to the month since decriminalisation, gay history — the bundling together of bygone experience under a discriminating invert gaze — is dead trendy.

How do you do it? Well, to judge from Hugh David's newly published *On Queer Street: A Social History of British Homosexuality 1895-1995* (HarperCollins, £20), with the greatest ease and facility. Start by boning up on a clutch of books by or about gay literary icons — E.M. Forster, Noel Coward, Joe Orton *et al.* Add a sprinkling of breathy "oral testimonies" by persons known only as "Nigel" and "Stephen", and miraculously a 300-page hardback will suddenly take shape under your hand.

What really irks about David's book (he wrote that hugely inaccurate biography of Stephen Spender in 1992) is the suggestion that all this fluff — coy dinner party chatter from Cecil Beaton's diaries, regurgitated accounts of Tom Driberg chasing sailors — is in any way representative or counts as "social history". A few continental watering holes excepted, scarcely a fumble in *Queer Street* takes place outside London. Much of the detail is simply cribbed from widely available printed sources, and large parts of the book are merely direct quotation. I mean, surely everyone *knows* about Ackerley and Ivor Novello and the ubiquitous Beverley Nichols by now, and even if they don't what is the point of pretending that their saucy escapades somehow reflect the 99 percent of gay life that *didn't* take place inside the Café Royal?

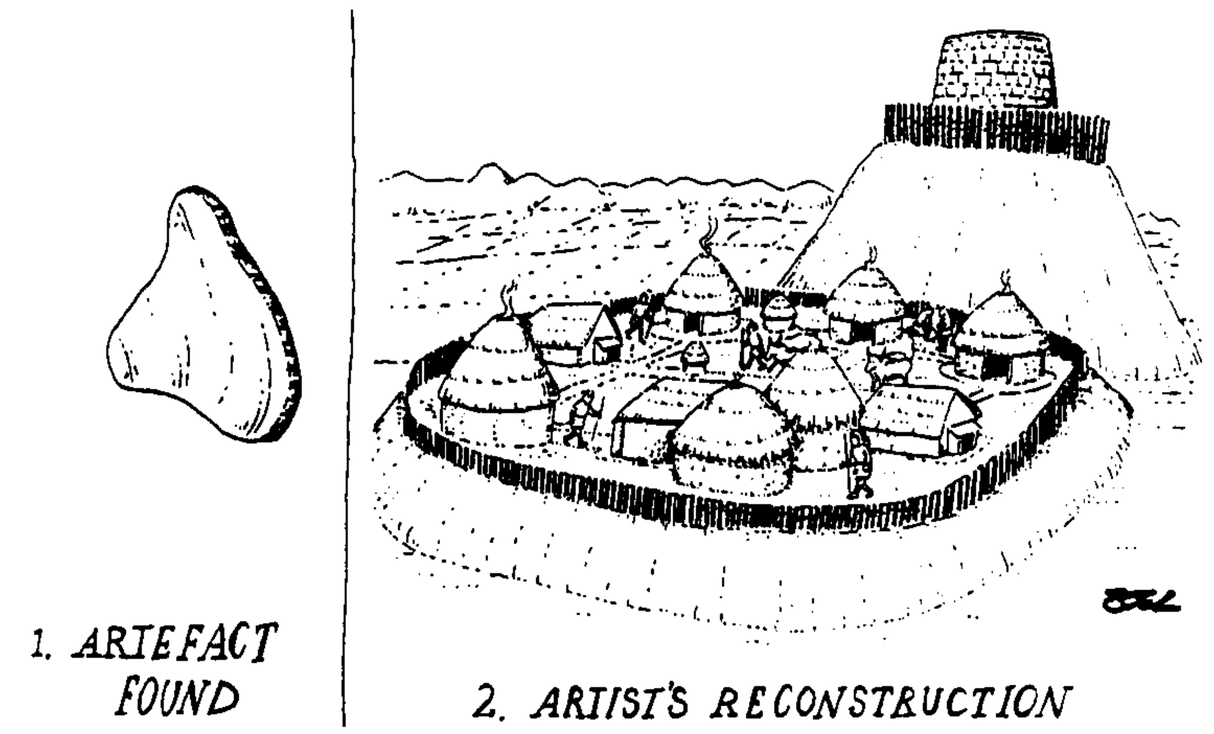
One step down from gay social history comes gay literary biography, another immensely fashionable genre in which distinguished writers previously misinterpreted by straights are sweetly reinvented by those who know. Bryan Connon's *Somerset Maugham and the Maugham Dynasty* (Sinclair Stevenson, £20), for example, starts with a suave jink around the efforts of previous biographers on the grounds that they failed to understand the nuances of the gay milieu which WS and his chums inhabited. And Mr Connon's gloss? A lot of immensely antiquated 20s gossip from salacious allegations (mostly unsubstantiated), frequent use of the words "may", "might" and "possibly", and fascinating recapitulations of what Noel said to Binkie. Or it may have been Twinky, in 1934.

Heaven forbid, darlings, that one should criticise Noel, Bev, Willie and their anatomists for being gay. No. What one resents, what one so hugely resents, is the reduction of practically any kind of gay experience to a bedrock of bitchy twitter, to sheer *naughtiness*. This failing is all the more culpable in that, when properly applied, the gay perspective can be highly illuminating.

Philip Hoare's *Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy and the First World War* (Duckworth, £16.95), for instance, is a well-researched (original sources, not just books by other people) and unexcitably written study of the libel trials involving the rabidly right-wing independent MP Pemberton Billing and his allegations that the German secret services had compiled a "black book" containing the names of 47,000 influential devotees of "Sodom and Lesbia".

Even then, though, the same figures mince inexorably forward. Ronald Firbank. Beverley again. Noel... What about ordinary people, the social historian wonders? Surely pre-1970s gay life existed in places other than Brighton and the West End and did so less affectedly?

One turns excitedly to the second part of Hugh David's book, titled *Ordinary People*, only to find, yup, the usual extracts from the diaries of Joe Orton and Kenneth Williams. Some years ago the late gay novelist Tom Wakefield wrote a fine but little known novel called simply *Mates*. It recorded, undramatically but with great warmth, the mundane relationship of an undistinguished but affectionate gay couple, cut short by death. Nothing to do, in fact, with orgies in male urinals, high jinks at the Villa Mauresque or period camping, and, one imagines, a great deal closer to the average gay experience than the truckloads of "social histories" and whatnot that purport to commemorate it.



Books & Bookmen

☐ *Eddie Bell, chairman of Harper Collins has been desperately hanging around John Major at literary parties in his campaign to woo him for his autobiography. Bell is apparently willing to part with £1 million for the rights to what promises to be the dullest book of the decade.*

Bell does not seem to mind the fact that the official biography of Major is coming out later this year and that there may only be a limited market for dull books about the former prime minister. There has been no formal announcement as yet but Bell had better hurry up. His days of paying out fortunes in advances for hopeless books may be over. There is a rumour going the rounds of the book world that Harper Collins is to be sold off to Transworld by Rupert Murdoch in the hope of raising some cash for his other loss-making ventures.

Meanwhile Lord Archer had delivered his latest masterpiece to Eddie – a top secret thriller about the Russian Mafia. There is apparently one small problem in that the word Mafia has been mis-spelt throughout. The current theory is that Jeffrey must be testing Eddie to see if he notices.

☐ **THERE was confusion in the June catalogue of Quality Paperbacks Direct, which saw an advertisement for** *The Roy Strong Diaries* **sitting on top of one for Will Self's new novel** *Great Apes*.

Strong **Self**

Though both ads were illustrated with photographs of their subject matter, readers were no doubt perplexed — not least because Self's book is about an artist and socialite who wakes up one morning and finds he's turned into a chimpanzee.

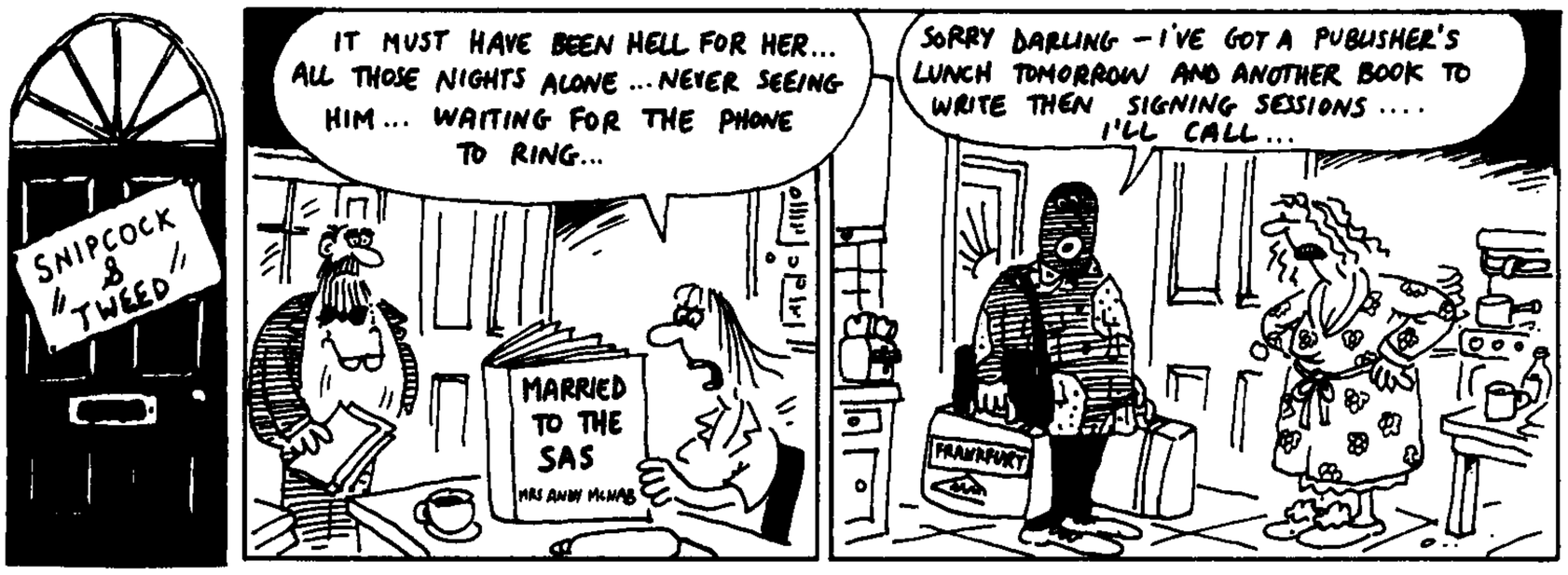
■ FOR years, W.H. Smith has got away with one of the most brazen scams in the book business: fleecing publishers of more than £5,000 for each title included in the Smiths' Christmas catalogue.

The reason the catalogue was so much more expensive than those of other retailers, Smiths said, was that it could guarantee advertising and display space in its stores. Publishers fell for this claim because their idea of market research is to believe what booksellers tell them. After years of heavy returns, reports of chaos at WHS's Swindon warehouse and failures to sight books in shops, the doubts eventually crept in.

Now a report in the trade press suggesting publishers might keep their hands in their pockets has caused panic at Smiths, where the latest of many disasters is the departure of chief executive Bill Cockburn. The company has sent round a letter rubbishing the report and adding that, by the way, it has dropped the price of entry to the catalogue — from £6,500 to £5,000.

The scam now is now to be found in the small print. In-store display space — which previously had supposed to be guaranteed as part of the cost of entry — will cost extra.

'Bookworm'


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HELL FOR HER... ALL THOSE NIGHTS ALONE ...NEVER SEEING HIM... WAITING FOR THE PHONE TO RING...
MARRIED TO THE SAS
MRS ANDY McNAB
SORRY DARLING – I'VE GOT A PUBLISHER'S LUNCH TOMORROW AND ANOTHER BOOK TO WRITE THEN SIGNING SESSIONS .... I'LL CALL...
FRANKFURT

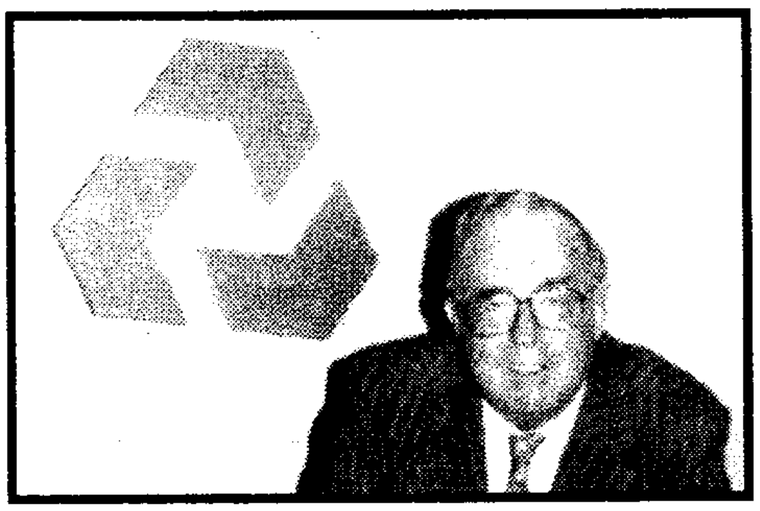
footnotes

ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BANK

HAVE you heard the one about the high street clearing bank which, asked to give a credit rating on one of its customers, recommended a fraudster who was in the process of swindling it? If not, read on.

Surveyor Niall Carter was delighted when his prosperous and respected Bath partnership Carter Hughes was asked to draw up plans for a multi-million pound hotel and leisure development in Somerset. Before he agreed, however, Mr Carter wanted to make sure that the firm behind the development — Baron Hotels and Leisure Ltd — could pay its bills.

He learnt that the hotel group had mortgages with the National Westminster Bank, which was convenient because Mr



WHAT A BANKER: Lord Alexander QC

Carter and his partnership banked with the Natwest. Mr Carter asked his bank manager David Easterbrook to check the hotel group's credit worthiness. Mr Easterbrook obliged, and rang to say he could find no reason why Carter Hughes should not proceed at once with the project. Mr Easterbrook even backed his recommendation by increasing Carter Hughes's overdraft facility by £65,000.

Carter Hughes set to work on the enormous scheme. As they spent money, they invoiced the hotels company. At first the bills were paid. But as the costs ran into six figures, the payments suddenly dried up. Then a cheque bounced. Then another. Eventually, in 1991, Carter Hughes was forced to court to get the money it was owed: it won judgment for £417,000.

Baron Hotels couldn't pay — it had gone into receivership — and the once flourishing firm of Carter Hughes was duly forced into receivership as well. At least 20 people lost their jobs. Distressed and puzzled, Mr Carter made further inquiries. He learnt:

- That at the time Baron was cleared for him by the National Westminster Bank, £41m of its debts were being called in — by the National Westminster Bank.
- That the National Westminster Bank had commissioned an inquiry by Touche Ross into the creditworthiness of the Baron Hotel and Leisure group.
- That Mr Shiraz Kassam, Baron group's chairman, had been convicted in 1975 and sent to prison for fraud — against the National Westminster Bank. Kassam has since been convicted of defrauding the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and is now serving three years.

Mr Carter has devoted much of the last five years to discovering why his bank gave the green light to a firm whose debts it was recalling, whose finances it was investigating and whose prime mover was a convicted fraudster.

He started with Mr Easterbrook who confirmed, on 26 March 1992: "At the time the contract was mooted a status inquiry was made on the bankers of Baron Hotels Leisure Ltd. As I recall, the reply was a standard satisfactory report. We cannot be held responsible for the opinions of other banks or branches."

Er, excuse me, replied Mr Carter: the "satisfactory report" came from the Natwest. On 14 May Mr Easterbrook wrote again: "You asked me by telephone if I could find out if Baron Homes and Leisure Ltd were creditworthy. I completed the normal bankers' inquiry which as you know was given in the normal format and carried the bank's normal disclaimer."

In vain Mr Carter tried in letters and calls to get a copy of this "normal disclaimer" which he had never heard of before. So he went higher. Messrs L.N. Wood, head of the bank's insolvency department, and H.M.V. Gray, chief executive of the bank, wrote in 1993 to say that Mr Easterbrook's assurances that he had carried out credit inquiries with the bankers of Baron Hotels and Leisure Ltd were "mistakes". But a meeting with Natwest executives still failed to reveal how the bank had recommended the company of a convicted fraudster whose £41m debts were being recalled by the bank.

A long and detailed complaint last year to Eddie George, governor of the Bank of England, produced a polite brush-off. Mr Carter, who is suing the Natwest for £1.6m damages for negligent misrepresentation, is still trying to get an explanation from the Natwest. In April he went to the Natwest's agm and asked the chairman, Lord Alexander QC: "When the NatWest bank calls in a customer's overdraft/loans, is it the bank's policy to give false references to other customers to protect its lending while the bank recovers its money?" Lord Alexander replied: "No. I am sure you would not wish to be a shareholder of a company that acted in that way."

Mr Carter has written to the organisation Justice questioning the suitability for office of its president, Lord Alexander, and to the Bar Council, asking whether it was appropriate for Lord Alexander to be appointed to a special panel entitled "effective justice".

RUINED: Niall Carter

— THE AITKEN SAGA —

Will the Crown Prince lose his head?

THE last time the *Guardian* won a sensational libel victory, the judge, Mr Justice French, aged 71, was the subject of an article in these pages (*Eye* 918) and very soon afterwards retired. Much the same prospect is in store for Mr Justice Popplewell, 70.

The former star wicket-keeper presided over the recent Jonathan Aitken libel case without a jury. At once he ruled on a key meaning of the contested *World in Action* programme: that Aitken had known that guns made by his arms company BMARC had been illegally exported to Iran.

World in Action said or implied no such thing. It had suggested only that Aitken should have known that the guns did not end up in Singapore where they were originally sent. The judge's arbitrary and absurd decision about the meaning of the programme (a matter normally left to a jury) would have certainly been appealed by Granada if the case had not been so prematurely aborted. It gave a terrific boost to the Aitken camp.

Perhaps the most interesting piece of information which, thanks to Popplewell, never came out concerned Prince Abdullah, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia who effectively rules that country during the illness of his father, the king. John Pike, former managing director of BMARC, provided a statement for the case. "It was known," he said, "that members of Arab royal families would act as agents for western countries. For example, Crown Prince Abdullah acted as agent for Astra subsidiary PRB in Saudi Arabia."

PRB was a huge Belgian-based arms manufacturer. If the crown prince was its agent, did he take commissions on the supply of PRB arms to Saudi Arabia? In Saudi Arabia it is illegal to take commissions for defence procurement. The penalties are severe. If found guilty of such an offence, the crown prince might very well have had to cut off his own head.

Mr X, CMG, OBE, MI6

Second only in interest to Mr Pike was Witness X. Before the trial Witness X had given a statement under his own name and rank at the foreign office — a statement which was freely passed without comment to the defence. Shortly before X appeared, Aitken's barrister Charles Gray made a terrific fuss about the fact that the witness was a spook. Mr Justice Popplewell at once decreed that his name was unpublishable.

All this fuss seemed rather unnecessary since Mr X did nothing but peddle the familiar foreign office line that "Jonathan Aitken was a capable, honourable and patriotic minister who always acted entirely properly... I do not think a minister could have behaved more properly and any criticism to the contrary is in my view ill-founded." No wonder that after his case collapsed Jonathan Aitken's friends were telling the newspapers that any lies he told were necessary to protect the interests of the secret services.

ARABLE PARABLE

THE conflict between the Church of England's concern for the community and the good old profit motive has exploded again in Bath.

For nearly 40 years executives of the diocese of Bath and Wells have cast a greedy eye on a juicy acre and a half they own in the city. The land has traditionally been used for allotments where citizens from different backgrounds plant vegetables in a contented community atmosphere of the type so warmly envisaged in the Church's historic document, *Faith in the City*.

The allotments have been consistently protected by the local council, and again and again the church's application to build houses has been refused. In 1995, the last time an application went to the planners, the refusal was unanimous.

In March this year the allotments' society wrote to the Bishop of Bath and Wells suggesting that the Millennium Commission could be approached for money to buy the land, which could then be devoted to nature studies for children and would be "forever green". At the end of May Nick Denison, diocesan secretary, wrote back apparently accepting the proposal and suggesting a price for half the site of £220,000. The allotments-holders were jubilant. But their mood changed on 19 June when the diocese issued a press statement saying it intended to build three houses on the site.

The following week, a letter arrived from Cluttons, estate agent to the C of E, announcing that the land was about to be surveyed by a Chipping Sodbury property developer called Beaufort Homes. A few days later, Beaufort Homes sent a digger on to the land, smashing up several vegetable beds. Mr Denison explained that the digger was "testing the soil".

The allotment holders fear their plots will be systematically destroyed and the land left fallow until planning permission is finally achieved. Their language is strong. One of them even called the bishop a "vandal" and mumbled something about not coveting thy neighbour's vineyard. What could she mean?

PLOT OF GOLD: Bishops keep out

SAC puts a sock in it

DESPITE growing pressure, the Scottish Arts Council is refusing to publish the expert report it has just received on the use of lottery money for films.

Harassed by constant complaints about conflicts of interest in the way the money was allocated (*Eye* 926), the SAC announced in February that is was setting up a special inquiry under former senior civil servant Jim Sinclair. But Sinclair's report is now being kept firmly under wraps. An SAC spokeswoman told the *Eye* it was an "internal document, never intended for publication".

Its conclusions, inevitably leaked to the *Eye*, may explain why. Mr Sinclair concludes that applications for lottery money for films in Scotland "have had problems", caused mainly by "insufficient control by the Scottish Arts Council over the process to ensure that its responsibility for public accountability is met".

The Scottish Film Production Fund, which makes recommendations for lottery grants, is accused of "inadequacy in terms of avoiding conflicts of interest"; "lack of transparency and accountability"; and of giving "limited information and guidance to Film Production Panel Members".

Various options are proposed including the best one — for the Arts Council to take over all the expert functions for film applications. When the council finally decides which option it prefers (if any), there is an outside chance it might convey its decision to the public which actually funds it. In the meantime about 40 letters from film buffs in Scotland have gone to the Scottish Arts Council demanding publication of the report's juicy section eight, which has been kept secret even from the *Eye*.

PS: Publicity on these matters in Scotland's quality press has been limited. This has nothing to do with the fact that Magnus Linklater, chairman of the Scottish Arts Council, is a former editor of the *Scotsman*; or that Alan Shiach, the scriptwriter and chairman of Scottish Screen at the centre of the controversy, is a director of the *Glasgow Herald*.

High Principals

BLAGDEN BLAGGED

■ **IN A letter in *Eye* 926, Michael Blagden, principal of Southgate College, north London, whined about the *Eye*'s attacks on "wicked college principals introducing new contracts for lecturers".**

Mr Blagden suggested it would be "a touch more fair if you revealed that they are forced to do so" — by the government. The implication of his letter was that the poor college principals are being bullied into imposing harsh contracts. "Why blame the real culprits in the treasury," he asked, "when you can have a go at the managers who have to make their policies work locally?"

It might have been fairer still if Mr Blagden had disclosed that he sits on the board of the Association of Colleges, which, like its more accurately named predecessor, the Colleges' Employers' Forum, campaigns for the employers and against the unions in further education colleges.

A confidential policy letter from Andrew Wye, of the department for education, to Ruth Thompson at the treasury as early as January 1994 spelled out the role of the Colleges' Employers' Forum. "Roger Ward explained that the CEF has a definite strategy for moving the majority of lecturers onto the new flexible contract. It has already stated its intention to offer no pay rise this year to lecturers who insist on sticking to the Silver Book [the old trade union contract]. This policy will be repeated in future years." Roger Ward of the CEF now runs the Association of Colleges with the eager cooperation of Michael Blagden.

ROGER WARD: The bosses' man

DONNYBOY SACKS AGAIN

■ **TERRY ASHURST, swashbuckling principal of Doncaster College, is sticking firmly by the rules for college principals set out for him in the last *Eye*. Rule number three was: carry on sacking.**

Terry responded almost at once by telling John Giddins, respected sociology teacher at the college for the last 19 years, that his post was now redundant. Giddins is the lecturer's trade union representative at the college, and he once had a row with the director of personnel, Nina Regan, the principal's wife, after which Nina was obliged to apologise.

Following the *Eye*'s piece about her startling rise up the college hierarchy since 1991 when she was made Ashurst's secretary while still his mistress, the *Doncaster Star* rang the principal for a comment. Ashurst retorted: "The [Nina] situation has existed unchallenged for six years."

He must have forgotten the consistent questions and complaints about Nina by a former governor of the college, Marie Lane. Ms Lane complained about Nina's unsuitability for the jobs she got and the obvious conflict of interest her promotion created. When she didn't get the answers directly from Ashurst, Marie Lane raised the issue at governors' meetings and with the then secretary of state, John Patten.

ASHURST: The Boss

No one could tell her why a principal should be allowed to promote his mistress and his wife so blatantly. Ashurst's reaction was predictable. He tried to get Marie Lane removed as governor. When he could find no legal way to do so, he made sure her governorship was not renewed when it fell vacant in 1994.

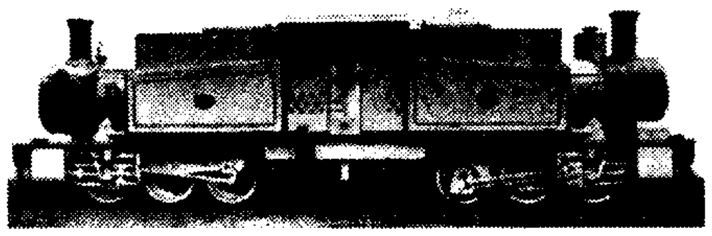
Gorman 1 – British AIRWAYS 0

JOHN GORMAN, who was universally ridiculed when he didn't turn up in court for his action against British Airways because he was ill in hospital, has won his case for an appeal.

When Gorman didn't turn up, BA's lawyers, after issuing the usual smears against Mr Gorman, demanded that his case against them be dismissed. Judge Nicholas Medawar immediately obliged. In February Gorman, recovered from his illness, went to Medawar's court to appeal. His lawyer, David Price, suggested Gorman should go into the witness box for cross-examination by BA's lawyers. Medawar refused. Gorman applied to appeal.

Lord Justice Swinton-Thomas turned him down, but this month two other appeal justices, Judge and Aldous agreed there were grounds for arguing that Medawar had been unreasonable. The case goes to a full appeal hearing in the autumn.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Prism Rail

PRISM RAIL's nominal profit of £6.9m announced last week is not surprising given the vast first-year subsidies it was paid at a time when the economy (and thus demand for rail travel) was booming — so the news is unlikely to arrest the marked decline in its share price.

When Prism was floated last year its share price doubled before it had run a single train, and then continued to rise. But since Prism took control of its fourth and final franchise, share prices have been declining — from 590p in January to 280p by the beginning of July.

Perhaps some of Prism's shareholders are regular travellers on its West Anglia Great Northern (WAGN) franchise, where complaints increased by 80 percent in the first quarter after Prism took over. One or two might belong to the Stevenage rail users' group, which is unhappy that Prism — at its first opportunity to change timetables — cut peak services to and from London by around 15 percent. Another possibility is that the City has now twigged that there is a difference between being successful at bidding for franchises and running them successfully.

Prism Rail enjoyed phenomenal success at bidding: it won the second largest number of franchises (after National Express) and each new one pushed up the share price. The founding directors made so many millions so rapidly through share options that even pension-fund managers objected.

Prism stood out because it was a new company; other highly successful bidders were established companies or had management buy-out teams at their core. Prism is a consortium of bus managers who got together to milk the franchising system — set up after the Tories took advice from Kenneth Irvine, a Prism director (*Eye* 907).

Prism found inspiration in the cost-cutting world of deregulated buses, and as luck would have it cost was the only factor which mattered to the Tories' quango responsible for franchising. Prism succeeded by promising to make do with a lower subsidy than the other bids, some of which came from directors with genuine rail experience and offered bonuses — like higher train frequencies or coordination with local bus networks — in return for a slightly higher subsidy.

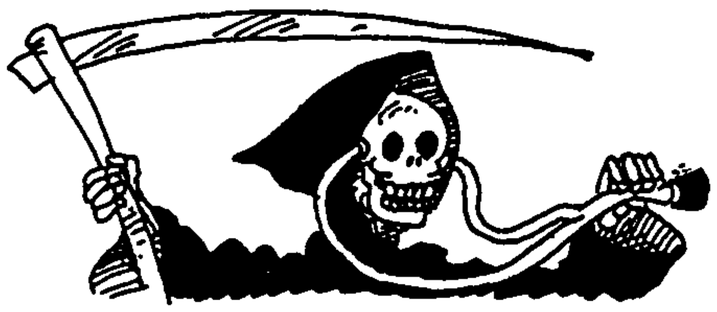
As a result of Prism's austerity bidding, South Wales and West Railway (SWWR) and Cardiff Railway are among the most miserable franchises of all. No new trains are promised, despite the reliance of both franchises on cheap bus-style Pacer trains which are being scrapped as soon as possible by franchisees in the north.

The expensive franchising process has not produced a solution to the disgraceful replacement of rush-hour trains by buses on the Bristol to Severn Beach line where commuters are expected to change mode of transport on journeys of just 10 or 14 miles. Lack of train capacity is forcing school children on to parallel buses in Devon, and Cornish passengers say their local trains are being replaced too often by buses.

Most franchise agreements enshrine at least a few upgrades to services, but the list of commitments for SWWR was so thin it was padded out with one service Prism is merely continuing. The list was equally poor for Cardiff Railway, mainly committing Prism to new services from Pontypridd to Manchester and Portsmouth. Prism is backpedalling even on this: apparently it doesn't have the money to pay Railtrack to undertake the minor infrastructure alterations needed.

Prism Rail offered a stout defence in April when the pressure group Save Our Railways issued a report claiming three of Prism's four franchises were heading for massive losses as subsidy for them is cut year on year. The report's author, formerly employed by Coopers & Lybrand, listed Cardiff Railway, WAGN and SWWR among what he believed would be the five worst-performing franchises. Prism said he was talking through his hat because he didn't have crucial commercial information. Six months ago the City would have believed Prism. Now it doesn't seem so sure.

'Dr B. Ching'



DOING THE ROUNDS

Informed Consent and Material Risks

THE national questionnaire study of unsupervised surgical training collated by Professor Janet Wilson from the University of Newcastle* was widely reported in the media. But the central issue of informed consent was ignored.

Prof West confirmed what all doctors, and very few members of the public, already know: that two thirds of all operations performed by surgeons in training are unassisted.

In some cases, senior help may be close at hand, but in many others it is not and inexperienced trainees just have to muddle through as best they can.

Of course not all trainees are inexperienced, as the **Royal College of Surgeons** was quick to point out; but the widespread practice of allowing trainees at any level to perform major operations unsupervised *for the first time* is both diabolical and legally indefensible. Prof West found that senior house officers (hardly experienced surgeons) were left alone to do their first salivary gland excisions, hernia repairs and stomach, spleen and gall bladder removals with their senior "support" not even present in the hospital.

One rung up the ladder, surgical registrars were doing very complex, life-threatening surgery of the liver, gall bladder and pancreas, often in emergency situations. Then there were emergency bowel resections, leaking aortic aneurysms and a kidney transplant — all done for the first time unsupervised. The list for head and neck surgeons is so unsettling as to be almost unprintable (eg radical neck dissection) and even consultants had to perform operations they hadn't witnessed before.

The analysis of all this has focused on the shambles of medical training, brought about by a combination of professional arrogance, dereliction of duty and, most pertinently, the fact that we have fewer doctors per head of the population than most other countries in western Europe.

Doctors have a legal duty to gain informed consent from patients prior to any procedure. In essence, "every patient has the right to make his or her own decision regarding medical treatment and care, and in order to make that decision is entitled to have full information regarding the material risks". What risk could be more material than a junior surgeon performing your major operation for the first time unsupervised? And yet, NHS patients are seldom given information as to the identity of their surgeon, and never whether he or she has proven competence for the operation.

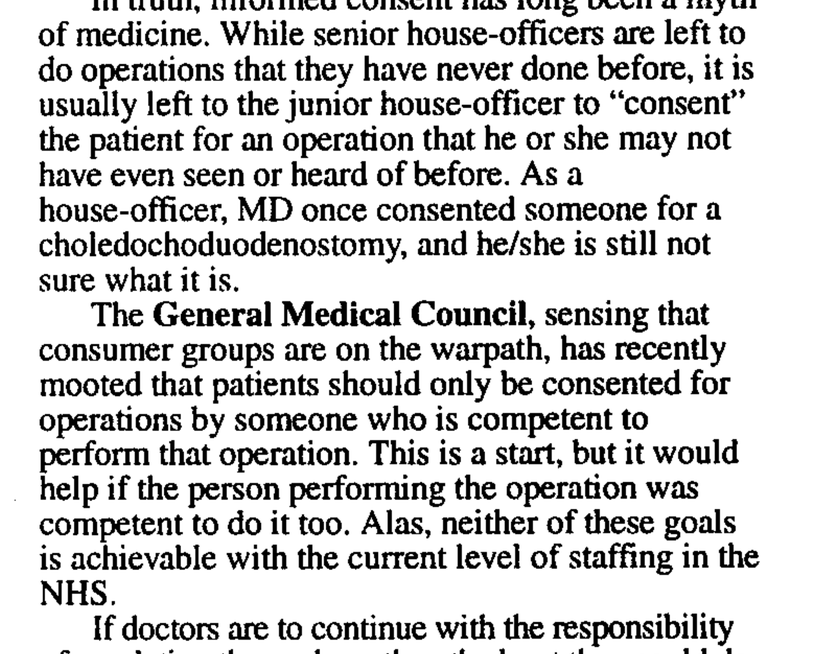
In truth, informed consent has long been a myth of medicine. While senior house-officers are left to do operations that they have never done before, it is usually left to the junior house-officer to "consent" the patient for an operation that he or she may not have even seen or heard of before. As a house-officer, MD once consented someone for a choledochoduodenostomy, and he/she is still not sure what it is.

The **General Medical Council**, sensing that consumer groups are on the warpath, has recently mooted that patients should only be consented for operations by someone who is competent to perform that operation. This is a start, but it would help if the person performing the operation was competent to do it too. Alas, neither of these goals is achievable with the current level of staffing in the NHS.

If doctors are to continue with the responsibility of regulating themselves, then the least they could do is follow the American example where surgeons and anaesthetists are legally obliged to publish audits of their work that are freely available to the public.

* See *British Medical Journal*, 21 June 1997.

M.D.



"Yes, it's been a good year for some of us..."

DOWN ON THE FARM

GEFF ROOKER has made a brilliant start as food minister at the ministry of agriculture: he's allowed himself to be suckered into sponsoring a leftover bill floated, but abandoned, by the Tories.

Rooker's balls-up is what appears to be a minor technical measure under the anodyne title of the plant varieties bill. With the minister's gullible assistance, it has passed through the Commons and, if allowed free passage through the Lords, will wreck what is left of independent arable farming in the UK.

The bill proposes an apparently reasonable degree of protection to plant breeders. The target is the farmer who saves seed from his harvest to grow more crops without buying more seed from merchants. Under the bill, seed will remain the "intellectual property" of the breeders for 25 years — 30 for potatoes — who will be able to extract royalties each time a crop is grown.

Rooker, in his ignorance, lauds the bill as providing finance to ensure the continued healthy development of the seed industry, not realising that farmers already have to pay twice the amount for seed used for growing than they get for their home-grown grain. Thus, the breeders are already well-rewarded for their trouble and have no difficulty recovering their costs.

But there is more to this than meets the eye. Much of the plant breeding in the UK is now owned by pharmaceutical multi-nationals like Zeneca — formerly ICI — who also supply fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides. By some not altogether strange coincidence, these companies also happen to be vitally interested in promoting their hugely expensive genetically engineered seed — which need more fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides, etc.

Rather than milking existing varieties for royalties, therefore, what is really intended is that "farm-saved" seed can be made uneconomic by imposition of swingeing fees, forcing farmers off their old varieties and on to the more profitable genetically engineered types. They then need increased chemical supplies to maintain yields and are locked into an unhealthy dependency from which there is no escape.

The ultimate irony, however, is that since the net effect of the bill will be to reduce the number of plant varieties available, the law will fall foul of the Rio convention on biodiversity in which the UK government pledged to maintain varieties of crops. Rooker has let this one by presumably without realising what he is doing, thus proving that being "green" does not necessarily mean being conservation-minded.

'New Muckspreader'

In the City

SOMETHING strange has been stirring in Scandinavia involving the one-time merchant banker and Guinness director who is now the peer formerly known as Jonathan Guinness.

Previously the bouffant Jonathan has been better known for his far-right views than his City achievements. Now succeeded to the Guinness family title of Lord Moyne, the erstwhile Monday Club chairman, whose mother married British Fuehrer Sir Oswald Mosley, has been on a Scandinavian spending spree which mystifies those with knowledge of his post-Guinness business career and modest family fortune.

First, Moyne, who describes himself in British company records as "author, peer and company director" (his directorships include the Oggie Oggie Pasty Company), agreed to pay around £19m for control of Trustor, a Swedish investment company. Soon afterwards, in early June, Moyne took out the cheque book again to offer some £34m for a controlling stake in the Finnish sporting goods group Amer, owners of the Wilson tennis racket brand.

Both deals were soon mired in controversy and threats of legal action. Trustor shareholders objected to the side deal whereby Moyne agreed to sell the controlling stake in one of its investments to the man who sold the peer control of Trustor. Trustor shareholders considered the sale price a steal and prompted a successful rival bid from the Swedish engineering group Sandvik.

Then late last month the Amer deal unravelled when the Finnish academic institutions who had earlier accepted Moyne's offer cancelled the supposedly binding agreement without explanation. This followed a rival approach from a Finnish group which was initially rebuffed. Where that leaves Moyne's Scandinavian business ambitions which he suddenly discovered at the age of 67 is unclear.

Little had been heard of Moyne since, as Jonathan Guinness, he left the board of the family drinks group in 1988. As a non-executive director he had been part of the decision to sack chief executive Ernest Saunders in the wake of the Distillers bid scandal. His history of the Distillers affair has long been promised.

Jonathan succeeded to his poet father Bryan Guinness's title in 1992. The second Lord Moyne left an estate valued at £13m but the Guinness family have long been adept at utilising offshore trusts to protect their wealth. However, Jonathan was never perceived as being as rich as other family members.

Certainly his recent business activities have not suggested a new-found fortune. Moyne is a director of a small PR company, Introcom. He was a director of Tajik Air which crashed after little more than a year in December 1994. A partnership with Swedish foreign exchange dealer Peter Mattsson in Mattsson Guinness Securities is endangered by a threat from the Registrar of Companies to dissolve the company for non-filing of accounts.

All of which makes the Scandinavian bids and the more than £50m put up to make them all the more intriguing.

NATIONAL Westminster Bank is clearly engaged in a desperate damage limitation exercise over its £77m derivatives loss as its chief suits look to save their own jobs from the wrath of institutional shareholders, a predatory bidder and a concerned Bank of England.

Provided with a handy scapegoat in over-ambitious but under-talented trader Kyriacos Papouis, who had put his hand up to losing the bank multi-millions and then covering up the losses, NatWest has clearly decided to blame him for everything, even when it knows different.

This explains the cryptic report put out last month which revealed losses and mispricing of trades on interest rate options other than in D-marks, which was the only trading book run by Papouis. It also explains the refusal of bank officials to depart from the tightly worded script provided by lawyers Linklaters & Paines which accompanied the news that six NatWest Markets executives had resigned although none was said to have been responsible for the actual losses. They had merely failed to supervise Papouis and his supervisors.

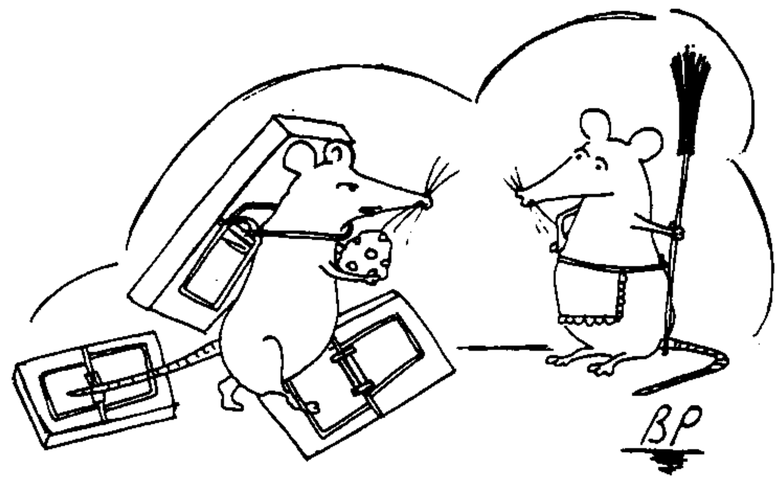
However, the NatWest cover-up is unlikely to survive for long. The reason is that Papouis is unlikely to remain silent about what he knows. And that suggests that mispricing to hide loss-making option and swap deals was a common practice before he took over and continued elsewhere. Pricing interest rate options involves highly complex mathematical models obviously understood by few at NatWest Markets paid to do so.

Papouis has told NatWest, and is likely to tell the Securities & Futures Authority (SFA), that there were already substantial daily losses on the D-mark book that were being covered up by deliberate mis-pricing of option trades when he took it over in 1994. Papouis says that he was instructed to carry on with this policy. As a result, the already hidden losses became greater. Just how much of the £77m they contributed, only the secret report by Coopers & Lybrand presumably details.

Papouis went on to make bigger and better losses, digging himself into a deeper and deeper hole. So he has every reason to blame others if only to spread the blame. But it is also clear other NatWest dealers were doing the same because the internal investigation found mispricing and hidden losses on the sterling options book run by Papouis's boss Neil Dodgson, as well as on other smaller dealing books with which Papouis had no connection.

Dodgson ran the D-mark options book prior to Papouis. It is Dodgson who, Papouis says, told him to cover-up the losses. This is vehemently denied by Dodgson, who says he knows nothing about mis-pricing of either D-mark or sterling options. NatWest clearly has no evidence to dispute this as it has made no allegation of wrongdoing against Dodgson. He was forced to resign for failing to supervise Papouis, whose allegations must be considered as self-serving.

But that still leaves unanswered who was responsible for the sterling losses and mispricing, and why was it not spotted by Dodgson or any of his superiors or the auditors. A question the SFA is certain to address — rather than the Serious Farce Office which, after the Blue Arrow debacle, is unlikely to want ever again to enter the world of arcane City practices (especially one where a jury of mathematics scholars may be required to understand the evidence).



"Don't start... Just don't start!"

TO THE surprise of absolutely nobody, the Bar Council decided that David Cocks QC did not help to mislead the then attorney-general Sir Nicholas Lyell over the plea bargain negotiations that resulted in conman Roger Levitt receiving a community service "sentence".

The disciplinary inquiry was caused by the Serious Farce Office misinforming Lyell over its role. It offered the "totally dishonest" Levitt a deal which was almost certain to mean he would do no time. Not that Roger the Dodger was prepared to do any. As a result Lyell made a false statement — to Tory MP John Marshall — denying the SFO offered the deal.

The Bar Council considered the evidence over three days in May and June. Remarkably, all the evidence was in camera. Even the two complainants — Marshall and Levitt's lawyer John Perry — were not allowed to be present or invited to give evidence in person! Former SFO director George Staple provided a lengthy statement about what he was told by Cocks. So too, presumably, did case controller (sick) Fred Coford, who is still at the SFO.

It is far from surprising that Staple and Coford sought to fudge what had happened over Levitt given the predictable (to everyone but them) uproar that followed his smiling exit from court. What is amazing is that they preferred to cut a deal with a crook rather than risk a trial. Equally inexplicable is that Staple took the decision without consulting senior colleagues other than the hapless Coford and prosecutor Cocks, who presumably read that his clients were not up for a trial.

SFO insiders say Staple believed, perhaps from Cocks, that Levitt might walk on the first trial which involved deceiving the regulator FIMBRA. That could have jeopardised the more serious second trial. But why did Staple think Levitt could win? Any juror was unlikely to be impressed by such an obvious conman. He looks exactly what he is. As boxing promoter Frank Warren remarked — he has a face that deserves to be punched.

Furthermore, the risk to the SFO in trying and losing was surely greater than in folding up? Especially as it had just accepted a similarly much criticised plea bargain with Terry Ramsden — a move which determined Levitt to insist on doing no time for his crime. The answer seems to be that Staple lost his nerve. But the true story and what role Cocks played in it, the taxpayer, who funded it all, is not allowed to know.

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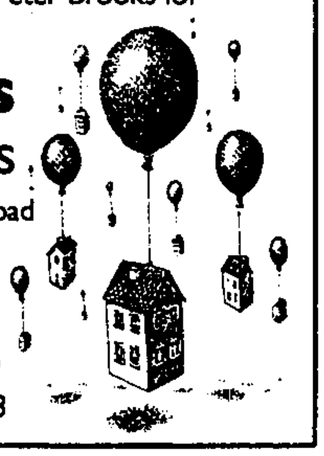

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LADY PRESENTLY rescuing owls seeks funds to set up sanctuary. Any donations gratefully received. Box 0228.

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STUDENT WITH CHILD — needs £500 to finish degree. CLYDESDALE 80-07-34, 00621963.

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COURAGEOUS MUM — African trek, help reach £1800 target Cancer Research. LLOYDS 30-94-63, 0247747/85. Phone 01525 370755.

ENGLISH GRADUATE requires funds to continue study. Please help. NATWEST 60-12-51, 99620626.

LOTTERY FUNDED FILM seeks extra finance for completion. Copy available for viewing. Tel/Fax: 0171 627 1857.

GRANTLESS, DESPERATE student — please help. NATWEST 60-16-06, 86246380.

TANTRIC SEEKS ALMS — RBS 16-30-28, 13008927.

DEAR EYE READERS — please could any of you help with a personal teaching project. Contributions needed to purchase replicas of Ancient Roman/Greek armour/weapons, with the aim of making HISTORY more visual for children and bringing it a little closer to them. Any donations sincerely appreciated. Tel PAUL: 01344 52753 or ABBEY NATIONAL 09-01-26, A/c 31845208 or Box 1928.

NO FUTURE NEEDS input to go up instead of sideways. MIDLAND 40-14-03, 31619888.

HELP! MIDLAND 40-03-15, 71260758.

PENSIONER, NOT RICH but NOT in need. However, should any person care to help with my future quality of life, I will not object — Forest, HALIFAX 00572964, Code 11-01-20.

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STRICTISH GENT, fifties, wltm buxom, submissive, n/s female. Clacton, Essex. Box 0928.

KIND, GENTLE, married man, 40 something, seeks attractive lady for fun relationship. Yorkshire area preferred but not essential. Complete discretion assured. Box 1028.

ATTRACTED BY a little discreet adventure? I'm tall, professional, male, married, early 40s, and looking to meet a larger lady for a gentle, no-strings relationship. Contact me. North London. Box 1528.

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THERE IS A PASSIONATE tiger trapped inside many apparently staid mature married ladies! Can this tall, slim, masterful director, 55, help release it? London/Kent/Sussex. Box 2228.

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ATTRACTIVE, TALL, caring male 40s seeks oriental beauty for fun and frolics. London/SE. Box 2828.

ATTRACTIVE BLONDE female University graduate seeks truly unattached male aged 35 to 50 based in the north of England or South/Central Scotland for fun, friendship, theatre companion, dinner date and the other usual reasons. Please send a photo with a letter and I will reply. Box 2728.

UNCOMPLICATED KENTISH bachelor seeks bubbly, attractive 20s spinster. Photo. Box 2628.

MAN 45 — bright, fit, attractive, kind, attached, seeks similarly unfulfilled woman any age, North London. Box 2827.

COMPELLING WOMAN, early 30s Oxbridge law graduate now in TV, charm, wit and first class mind, but strong emotions and the ability to inspire them. Very attractive, with slim but classically feminine figure, seeks interesting, ambitious, left-leaning man, 5'10" plus, for Tony and Cherie act next century: go on, make your biographer's day. Photo and manifesto in confidence, please. Box 2428.

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MARRIED MALE, 50, seeks home counties lady for regular caring daytime relationship. Box 3128.

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5TH ELEMENT SOUGHT by archaeologist, male 31, who wants to date something young for once! ME: "Nice", funny, complex. YOU: Female, 25-35, cultured, witty, romantic. Yorkshire. Box 3728.

MRS ROBINSON, 35 to 50, sought by graduate 30 for dangerous liaisons. London. Photo please. Box 3628.

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MALE, 28, looking for old-fashioned country loving Emma Thompson lookalike. Somerset. Box 1126.

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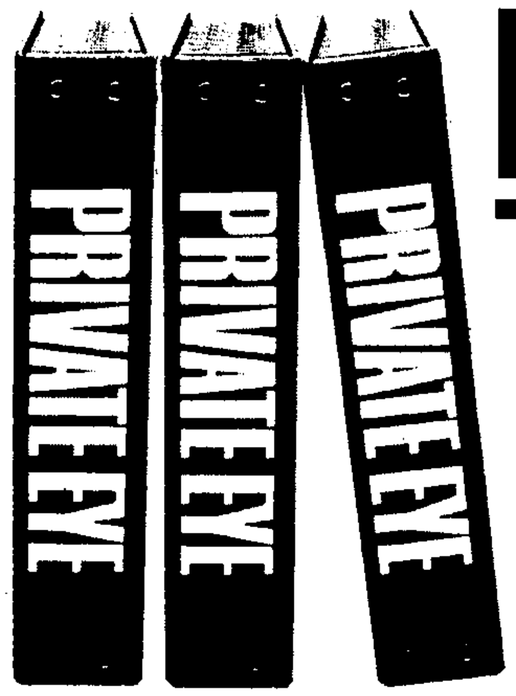

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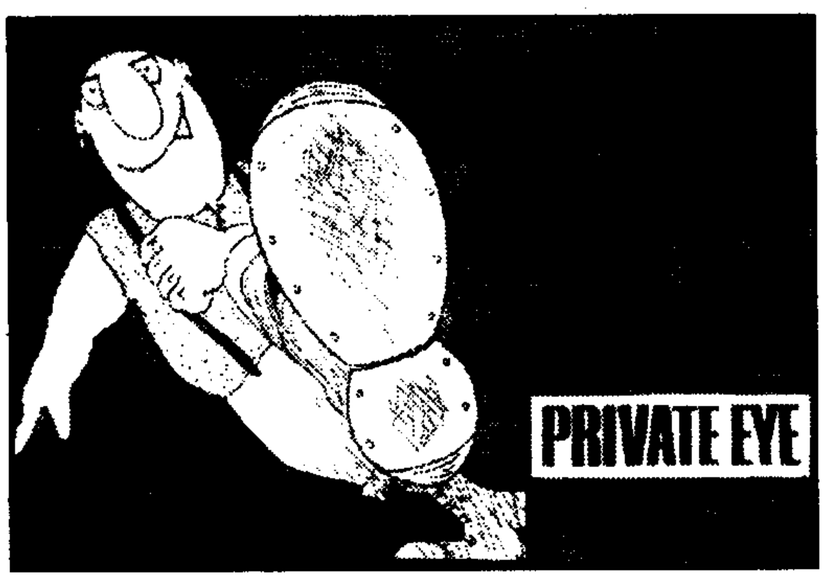

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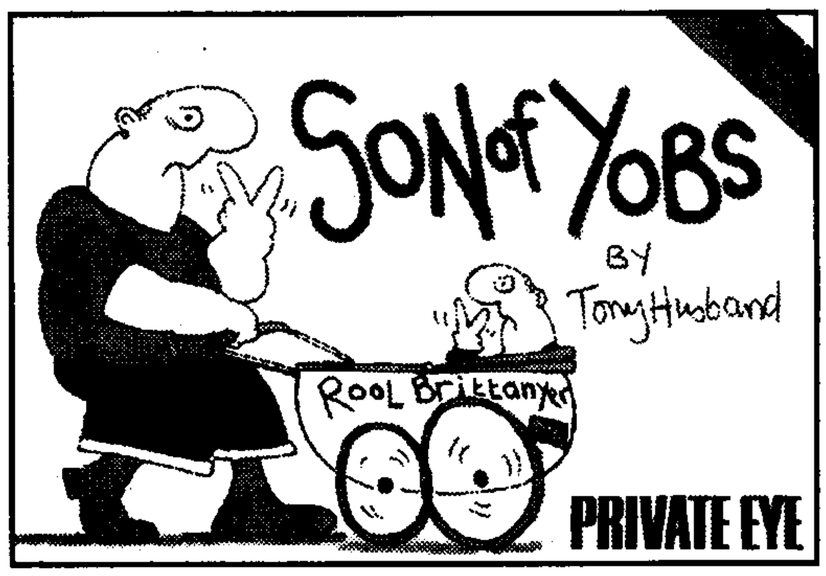

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